

Heroes and Enemies: American Second World War Comics and Propaganda

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Dedicated to Joshua (Jos) Kerr and to William (Billy) Harrison.

The one never doubted. The other never brought it up.

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Libertas per Sapientiam.

Abstract

During the Second World War, American comic books were put to use for the war effort as carriers of propaganda. This thesis explores the propaganda in comics that were published with the cooperation of government and military institutions such as the Office of War Information and the United States Marine Corps. The propaganda contained within titles published in tandem with government institutions was primarily communicated through the interplay of the characters of the hero and the enemy or villain. Grouping these characters into recurrent types according to their characterisation allows for close reading of their particular propaganda function.

This thesis establishes a connection between the Office of War Information, The Dell Publishing Company, Parents' Magazine Press and Street and Smith Publications, carrying forward the work of Paul Hirsch (2014). Each of these publishers produced comics that included war related propaganda, as did the Office of War Information itself. Added to this sample are the war comics produced by Vincent Sullivan, the editor of Magazine Enterprises and its subsidiaries, that were published with the cooperation of the US Marine Corps and other military institutions. In addition, a sample of the comics of William Eisner are included in order to demonstrate that the same groupings of hero and enemy occur in fictional comic narratives as well as those that purport to be non-fictional. Similar to Joe Simon and Jack Kirby's famous creation of Captain America, Eisner produced *Uncle Sam* in response to the rising patriotic fervour in 1941 as the country increasingly debated and prepared for war. Eisner was later enlisted to produce comics for the Pentagon on war related issues. There is also a discussion of Milton Caniff's contribution to the US military publication *Pocket Guide To China* and the Office of War Information publication *The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd President of the United States* (1943).

As a counterpoint to the propaganda function of each type of hero and enemy contained within the commercially published sample, this thesis analyses a selection of unpublished, soldier-illustrated comics from the Second World War thanks to privileged access to the Veterans History Project (2013) at the Library of Congress. These unpublished artefacts demonstrate that the comics medium allowed space for alternative voices to express their reaction to the conflict, resisting the wider propaganda narrative exhibited by the commercial sample and reacting to the loss of individuality and authoritarian structure of the military, while stylistically demonstrating the soldiers' affinity for comics such as George Baker's *Sad Sack* and anti-heroes such as Bill Mauldin's 'Willie and Joe'. In this way these soldier-illustrated comics presented a democratic counter-point to the lack of democracy within the armed forces (Alpers, 2003, 158) and exhibit a form of patriotism focused on the 'grassroots' elements of American everyday life and culture as opposed to the jingoistic and ideological patriotism of the commercial comics.

Methodologically, application of close reading to the content of comics' narratives, on the level of a particular panel, story, advertisement, or other content, reveals comics to be significant historical sources that offer insight into the propaganda embedded in the popular culture of the period. Critical discourse analysis is applied to the rhetorical elements of the comics in order to explore how many of them served to marginalise particular groups, identifying them as the 'enemy' in contrast with the 'hero' (Brundage, 2008). Similarly, a semiotic approach informed by the work of Roland Barthes (1973; 1987) is undertaken in order to understand the significance of both visual and rhetorical elements of the texts. Alongside this approach is the methodological assumption of the 'implied reader' advocated by Wolfgang Iser's (1978) that allows the analysis the virtual scope to discuss an idealised reader's potential response to each text. This notion of the 'implied reader' is counterbalanced by a consideration of Stuart Hall's (1980, 1997) three potential decoding positions in tandem with a consideration of the wider historical context.

Once the groups of hero and enemy are identified, subsets of both groups are developed according to their characterisation and the attributes they display. This is done in order to facilitate analysis of the ideology communicated by each of these character types. Identifying the function of each type of hero and enemy makes a new contribution to the wider field of propaganda studies. This contribution encourages a greater understanding of the role played by comics during the Second World War in encouraging ideological propaganda as well as allowing for resistance to it.

1. Introduction

During the summer of 1941, the Dell Publishing Company (DPC) created a one-shot comic entitled *U.S.A. Is Ready*. This publication boasted sixty-eight colour pages of information concerning the United States Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard, and predominantly focused on describing military insignia, equipment and manoeuvres. It also visually and rhetorically identified the enemy of the United States as Nazi Germany while also pre-empting an Asiatic attack and a Pacific as well as a European theatre of conflict. The narrative also deploys a number of devices that indicate American victory on both these fronts is inevitable.

The brief narrative content of the publication begins:

Overseas the skies rain death over the smoking Ruins of London, over the bomb-scarred invasion ports of Calais, Boulogne. In Ethiopian mountain defiles, barefooted tribesmen and their British allies harry the thinning legions of Il Duce. Summer has come, and the world stands poised on the edge of another volcano, ready to erupt.

On this side of the Atlantic, its 3,000 miles shrunk by the roaring motors of long-range flying fortresses, America is building a vast army of defense ... a streamlined, motorized body of men built around a nucleus of peace-time regulars. (*U.S.A. Is Ready*, 1941)

In these paragraphs can be seen several important rhetorical elements that formed part of the wider pre-Pearl Harbor propaganda narrative of the United States. The opening lines evoke the violence of the Blitz and allude to the possibility of Britain's invasion by enemy forces. At the same time the second line implies that the British are winning against Italian forces in Africa. The third line directly contextualizes the conflict as a global issue that cannot be ignored by America and aligns the Second World War with the First World War as "another volcano". The United States had entered the First World War on 6th April, 1917, despite initial widespread public opposition to interventionism (Boyer, 2001, 843).

The paragraph that follows this introduction develops these rhetorical elements by linking them with the need for American involvement in the second global conflict, albeit framed within a narrative of defence. This call for intervention pivots upon the implied possibility of America's invasion. As will be demonstrated, this trope of invasion is a recurrent motif within the comics analysed in this thesis, both prior to and during the conflict.

The association between men and machinery incorporated into the phrase "motorized body of men" is also highly significant. Such a phrase indicates the association between masculinity and machinery that was becoming prevalent during the period as the nation prepared for war. Language such as this not only possesses connotations of smooth and efficient functioning but also of post-human rhetoric frequently found in comics comparing the hero with machines or technology. This point is further elaborated later in this chapter.

Though occasionally punctuated with the exaggerated, melodramatic narrative style commonplace within comics, the information presented is, for the most part, accurate and informative. Alluding to Orson Welles' radio broadcast of 1938, the narrative states that "invasion is less likely than an attack from Mars" (*U.S.A. Is Ready*, Dell Publishing Company, 1941, 12. See figure 1.1). Despite this sensationalist rhetoric, the publication is intended to educate and reassure as well as to entertain, encouraging an interest in the war effort and, ultimately, enlistment in the armed forces through the deliberate inclusivity of the language. Phrases such as "our general staff," "our staff officers," and "our boys" recur throughout. At times the consumer is rhetorically placed within the narrative itself, encouraging identification with each branch of the armed forces in turn: "You feel your ship swing sharply" (*U.S.A. Is Ready*, Dell Publishing Company, 1941, 19); "In your cockpit-world, the Earth is a toy you can spin with a flip of your stick" (*ibid.*, 51). This use of such inclusive language was a strategy intended to strengthen consumer identification with the

pro-military messages that this text communicates (Blommert and Bulcaen, 2000, 450), similar to the rhetoric of James Montgomery Flagg's famous First World War poster, 'I Want You For The US Army' (see figure 3.9. The influence of this propaganda poster on Will Eisner's *Uncle Sam* is discussed in detail in chapter three). In turn, this encouraged support for American armament and shows this publication to be pro-enlistment propaganda, aimed at promoting military registration and cooperation in the wider economic effort, while also educating the population at large about military insignia and machinery.

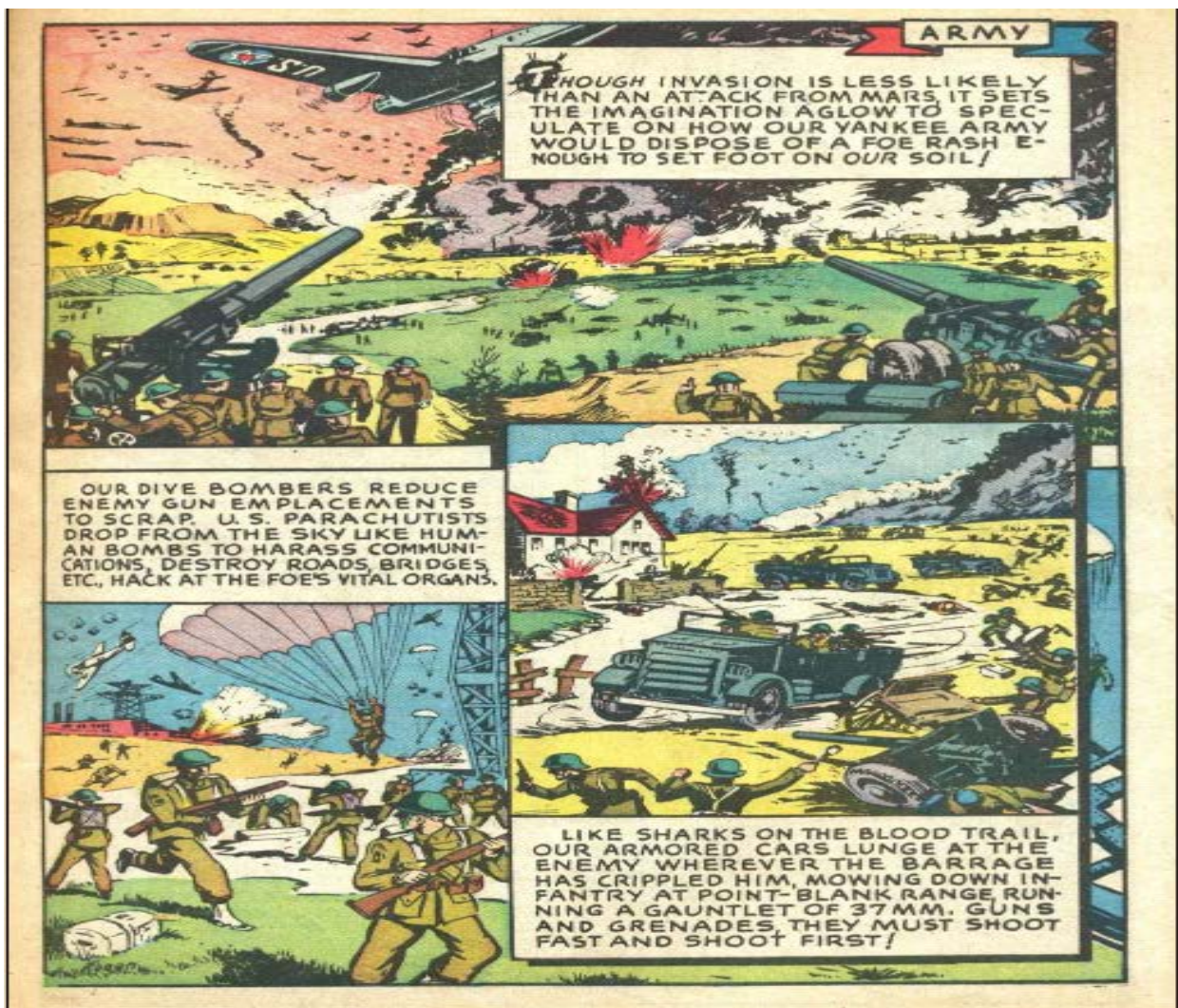


Figure 1.1. *USA Is Ready* (Dell Publishing, 1941).

Visually, this publication identifies the enemy of the United States as Nazi Germany. This is demonstrated in figure 1.1 in which the enemy are wearing *Stahlhelm* (German: lit. 'steel helm' or steel helmets), signifying that they are Nazis. Coupled with this, they are also wielding *Stielhandgranate* (German: lit. 'stalk hand grenade') that were nicknamed 'potato masher' or 'stick grenade' in English. These grenades were unique to German forces and were widely distributed during the First World War, entering popular culture in the 1930s and 40s as one of the most recognisable weapons of the *Wehrmacht* (Bishop, 1998).

Despite the comprehensive nature of the military that this comic depicts, the introductory narrative concludes:

This is a brief sketch of the mighty, draft-swollen force that the United States is whipping feverishly into shape - to defend its shores, the American way of life, against a new and ugly system of slavery. [...] This is America's army of 1941 [...] come what may, U.S.A. will be ready! (*U.S.A. Is Ready*)

This publication begins and ends by framing America's increasing armament within a narrative of defence. In this instance, however, the defence is not only against that of physical invasion. Reference to "the American way of life" is included in order to indicate that American identity and ideology are also in need of defence. Similarly, figure 1.2 claims that some of the enemy "will surely die for their mistaken ideals", while visually signifying that surrender to the superior might of the American forces is inevitable. This trope is used repeatedly in the comics that are analysed in chapters two and three.



Figure 1.2. *USA Is Ready* (Dell Publishing, 1941).

Interestingly, though this publication visually and rhetorically identifies the ideological enemy of the United States as Nazi Germany, it also contains a fictional story that pre-emptes the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and indicates that America will likely face a war that includes a Pacific Front (see figure 1.3). This narrative is used to demonstrate the overwhelming force of the American Navy and enemy ships are described as “stricken steel monsters.” This is an key example of how the enemy that threatens America is characterised in physically grotesque terms (discussed in more detail in chapter three and later in this chapter).



Figure 1.3. Opening panels of a story that pre-empt war in the Pacific (*USA IS Ready*, Dell Publishing, 1941).

Despite the opening narrative linking the looming conflict of the Second World War with that of the First World War, the enemy are described as “new”. This rhetorically distances the publication’s intended impact from any residual criticism of America’s involvement in the preceding conflict that readers might have. Rather, the new enemy threatens the ideologies of freedom and democracy that constitute the American way of life. Implicitly, DPC has identified the ideological enemy of the United States as fascism. This is clearly demonstrated in figure 1.4 in which enemy planes are clearly marked with the Nazi swastika and the narrative states: “The German offensive has crumbled.

Democracy rules the air!" In the First World War, American propaganda characterised the enemy by focusing on militaristic autocracy in the person of Kaiser Wilhelm and arguing that the concepts of 'Kultur' and 'Civilisation' were antithetical (see further, Menell and Rundell, 1998). This time, the enemy are cast as militaristic fascists who are ideologically opposed to the ideals of freedom, democracy and the American way of life.



Figure 1. 4. *USA Is Ready* (Dell Publishing, 1941).

U.S.A. Is Ready concludes with a penultimate photograph of members of the United States Army, a fleet of warships, and a formation of aircraft framing the American Pledge of Allegiance, brightly printed in the colours of the flag of the United States. This is followed on the final page by a photograph of Admiral Husband Kimmel, Commander-in-chief of the United States Fleet, and General George Marshall, Chief of Staff of the United States Army. The inclusion of these photographs, coupled with the style of illustration, indicates that this publication is dedicated to these military personalities. The occurrence of soldiers, ideological symbols and political personalities in one image demonstrates that these essential war-time elements exist as a cooperative. This is discussed further in chapter two.

Popular culture actively fashioned the contemporary understanding of the Second World War in the same way that it still fashions our understanding several generations later. Christopher Murray (2000) notes that the products of popular culture became a vital vehicle for the dissemination of political messages during the Second World War (Murray, 2000, 141). Consequentially, artefacts of popular culture, such as comics, became intrinsically linked with propaganda. This development was acknowledged and further engendered by the United States Office of War Information (OWI) and its subsidiaries (this point is discussed in greater depth in chapter 1). Accordingly, this thesis sets out the following question for investigation: what is the significance of a selected sample of Second World War era American comics in connection with total war propaganda and the representations of heroes and enemies that they contain?

As demonstrated by the content of *U.S.A. Is Ready*, the risk of invasion by belligerent foreign powers was a growing concern amongst the American public in the years preceding America's entry into the Second World War. The Monroe Doctrine, the mainstay of US foreign policy since its introduction by President James Monroe (1823), combined with the Roosevelt Corollary (1904) and the Clark Memorandum (1928) that

entrenched the argument that the United States possessed a self-evident right of self-defence, encouraged congressional approval of Major Lewis Hershey's Selective Training and Service Act (1940). This Act instigated the first instance of peacetime conscription in the United States and required all American men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-six to register for military service. Servicemen were then selected by a government lottery system and, if drafted, were required to serve for twelve months. The maximum age and length of service were subsequently extended to forty-five and two years respectively in August 1941.

The sample of comics selected for analysis in this thesis is justified by a traceable connection between creators or publishers and the propaganda offices of the US government or military institutions, as well as a avoidance of the 'superhero' genre (with the arguable exception of *Uncle Sam Quarterly* in chapter three) in order to widen current understanding of propaganda comics of the period. Chronologically, the sample begins in the summer of 1941, just before America officially enters the war, and extends until the cessation of hostilities in September 1945. The comics analysed in chapter two include *Real Heroes* (Parents' Magazine Press, 1941-1942), *Devil Dogs* (Street and Smith, 1942), *The United States Marines* (1943-1944) and *The American Air Forces* (Magazine Enterprises and subsidiaries, 1944-1945). All three of these publishing companies possess traceable links to either the OWI, the Writer's War Board (WWB) or the American military itself. Chapter two concludes with an analysis of unpublished comics by members of the American Armed Forces who served in the conflict and that demonstrate a counterpoint to the categories of heroism that exist in commercial propaganda publications. As well as this, the sample includes *Uncle Sam Quarterly* (1941-1942) by Will Eisner, who was recruited by the Pentagon to create comics for the military at the same time as working commercially for Quality Comics, and Milton Caniff's contribution to the

US Army publication *Pocket Guide To China* (1942). These will be discussed further in chapters two and three.

Comics maintained their highest sales and distribution figures during the Second World War and their position as popular mass culture developed within the context of 'total war' (a term defined later in this chapter). The wartime role that comics' heroes and enemies played in opposition to fascism initially developed from exaggerated fears of ideological infiltration prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Once America had openly declared war, comics began to serve the war effort in a number of ways. Arguably the most important contributions to American propaganda that comics made during the conflict was in their presentation of heroic role models and their characterisation of the nation's wartime enemies as monstrous villains, grotesque both physically and morally and as a corrupting force divergent from the status quo. They also dramatized the war as a mythic narrative of struggle between good and evil (Murray, 2011).

This study builds upon previous scholarship in the field of comics studies and propaganda and, in particular, the work of Murray (2000; 2011; 2012) on American comics and the Second World War. Importantly, this thesis carries forward and adds strength to existing research by adding new perspectives on the types of hero and enemy that occur within the narratives of total war propaganda comics. The identification of these hero and enemy types clarifies their propaganda function based on close readings of their visual and rhetorical characterisation and a consideration of their effect on an 'implied reader'. The study is based on access to the extensive comics archives held at the Library of Congress, key government sources concerning comics and unpublished documents created by American soldiers. The terms 'hero' and 'enemy' are defined later in this chapter.

As with the medium itself, the heroes and enemies of American comics during the Second World War developed within the cultural context of total conflict. For example, the

Justice Society of America (*All Star Comics* #3, 1941) constituted the first cooperative group of superheroes that worked together to defeat the enemies of the United States and defend American democracy. This pattern is contrary to the idea of heroic individualism that pervaded American cultural mythology prior to the Second World War (discussed further in chapter 2 and later in this chapter). The reason for this mythological shift within the context of total war is the wider need of the nation for cooperation in service to the war effort, particularly by those members of the population engaged in the armed forces and war production. However, this is contrary to other propaganda media, such as the film *Guadacanal Diary* (20th Century Fox, 1943), that made claims such as: “We out shoot ‘em, out fight ‘em, and we usually out guess ‘em because our men have learned to act as individuals” (for more on this comparison see chapter 2). This tension between individualism and group cooperation was used to the advantage of the OWI in its campaigns of persuasion and propaganda (discussed in greater depth in chapter 1).

After the US declared war, the first cooperative adventure of the Justice Society (*All Star Comics* #4) began. In this narrative, the heroes are given the task of fighting espionage on the home front by the director of the FBI who is implied to be none other than J. Edgar Hoover, overlapping fantasy and reality for the reader. In this same story, the Justice Society members are given a rallying cry that concisely sums up the contemporaneous ideology of the war effort: “For America and democracy!” (see figure 1.5). The cover of *All Star Comics* #4, on which the Justice Society are carrying a flag emblazoned with the aforementioned rallying cry, also visually signifies the ideal of democracy as a ‘shining beacon’ in a world overrun by fascist and totalitarian corruption by including the image of the Capitol Building in the bottom right hand corner (see figure 1.6).



Figure 1.5. The Justice Society "goes to war" with the rallying cry of "for America and democracy!" (*All Star Comics* #4, DC Publications, 1942).

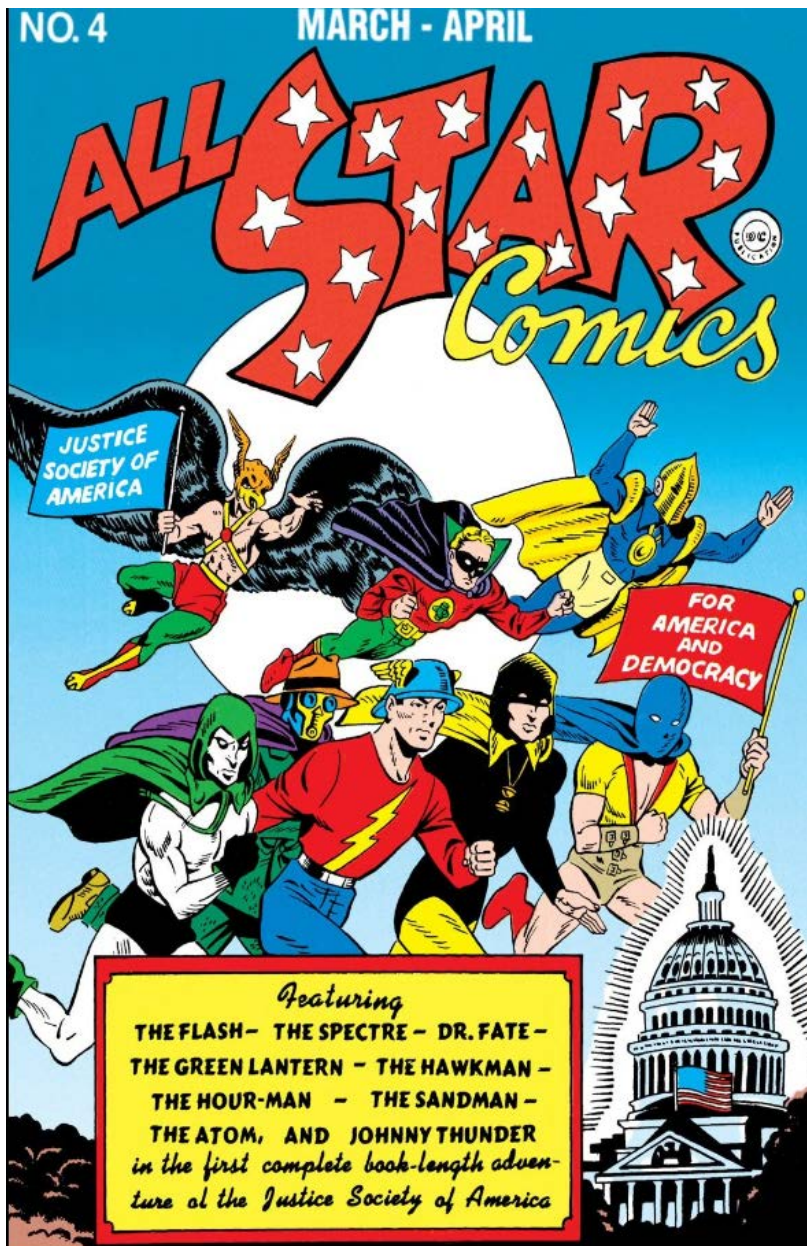


Figure 1.6. Cover of *All Star Comics* #4 (DC Publications, 1941)

A number of scholars disagree whether the Napoleonic Wars or the American Civil War represent the first instance of total warfare (for example, see Förster and Nagler, 2002; Bell, 2007). Yoram Dinstein has argued that: “Many a war is unquestionably ‘total’ in that it is conducted with total victory in mind” (Dinstein, 2011, 12). However, such arguments are based on an insistence on the unconditional or ‘total’ surrender of their opponents. Rather, it is the conflict of the First World War that is regarded as the first instance of large scale, industrialised engagement commonly referred to as ‘total warfare’ (Chickering and Förster, 2000). It was the First World War that gave rise to the concept of ‘total war’ due to “the mobilization of all belligerents’ industrial and economic resources” in service of the national war effort (Strachan, 2001, 4). As such, this thesis defines total warfare in the following sense:

A war may be deemed ‘total’ not only when its goal is the complete subjugation of the enemy. A war is also total when the means, used to attain a limited objective, are total. That is to say, war may be catalogued as total when the resources (human and material) of a Belligerent Party are mobilized in their totality (Dinstein, 2011, 13).

This definition clarifies the human element as an important resource mobilised in the pursuit of victory. It is the mobilisation of the people, the commitment to war on the home front and the front line, that comics’ heroes and enemies encouraged. As such, the term ‘total war’ is used throughout this thesis to mean the mobilisation of a nation’s total resources in service to the war effort, including the products of popular culture. This chapter now turns to a discussion of the unique attributes of comics as a historical source and as the primary textual sources for the analysis in this thesis.

Comics As A Source

‘Comics’ are here defined as an amalgamated literary and visual narrative constructed of sequential panels that are created by an artist (or team of artists and writers) working either freelance or as part of a workshop. When necessary, it is common within scholarship to use the term ‘comics’ as a singular in general reference to both the industry and the medium itself (encompassing newspaper comic strips, comic books, graphic novels, web comics, etcetera). The phrase ‘comics’ has been used throughout this thesis whether the sentence is conjugated in a singular or a plural sense in order to avoid unnecessary confusion or associations with the term ‘comic’ in the sense of comedic intention or reference to a professional comedian. Initially referred to as ‘comic strips’, these strips were subsequently republished in pamphlet form and referred to as ‘comic books’. Comics build upon the traditions of cartooning but importantly deviate from this much older form of communication by possessing multiple panels. The content of these multiple panels construct a narrative that render the story sequentially.¹ Stylistic similarities between comics and traditional cartoons, such as the use of caricature, are discussed later in this chapter.

Much academic work has already been published that argues for the validity of comics as a source for serious academic study (Silberman, 1986; Wright, 2001; Heer and Worcester, 2009; Murray, 2000, 2011; Smith and Duncan, 2012; Chapman et al, 2015). Scholarship on the topic of comics during the Second World War has generally focused on either the significance of this period in history for the comics industry or on the content of comics, predominantly of the ‘superhero’ genre, and their function as vehicles of propaganda (Riches et al., 2009; Murray, 2011). Application of similar methods of

¹ For more on comics as a sequential art form distinct from single panel cartooning see, among others, Eisner (1985), McCloud (1994), Roberts (2004), Meskin (2007).

comparative analysis and close reading to the content of non-superhero comics' is intended to develop current awareness of the historical significance of these texts.

As Anthony Brundage (2008) writes: "there are few elements of any society that cannot be "deconstructed" to reveal the manner in which they bolster the power of elites, maintain hierarchical distinctions, and marginalize those whom the majority sees as different" (Brundage, 2008, 16). This latter point is of particular relevance to the analysis of enemies presented later in this study (chapter three) and, as will be shown in the literature review that follows later in this chapter, is entirely aligned with a key principle of wartime propaganda, namely the identification of the nation's enemies as targets for hatred and dehumanisation. As with other forms of narrative, the tension in comics between the hero and the enemy either constructs, maintains or challenges tensions in the culture that created and popularized them (White and Able, 1963, 16).

Though there are occasional overlaps with other critical works, most notably Murray (2011), the analysis presented here addresses a gap in the scholarship of Second World War era comics by examining the content of selected propaganda comics with a focus on the types of hero and enemy that their narratives contain. Other original contributions to the existing body of knowledge occur in the analysis of American government documents previously unknown to scholarship (chapter one) and the unique examination of unpublished amateur comics created by US service personnel during the era included in chapters two and three. In the case of chapter one, the analysis of pre-war advertising documents and internal OWI memoranda demonstrates that the OWI and WWB were consciously aware of the propaganda value of comics and actively encouraged their use to propagate salient war information. The analysis of unpublished comics created by soldiers in chapters two and three indicates that comics were used as a discursive space that allowed resistance to the un-democratic ideology of the military and dominant discourse of

commercial propaganda as well as providing soldiers with an outlet for their personal reaction to the war.

One of the primary elements of comics as a mass medium of communication and entertainment is their blurring of the distinction between elements of fantasy and reality, between fiction and non-fiction within their narratives (for example, in the earlier inclusion of J. Edgar Hoover in *All Star Comics #4*). They may also communicate fiction in a way that is realistic or, alternatively, non-fiction in a way that is iconic, conceptual or ideal. As there will be a discussion of comics that purport to be non-fictional accounts of war, this thesis takes the following definition of the non-fictional narrative: “[N]onfiction narratives enjoy one attraction that fiction lacks, and that is that they claim to tell a story that is *factually* true” (Abbott, 2008, 145. Emphasis in original). The key-word here is “claim. The important feature, at least for this study, is the premise of a claimed relation to the real world in contrast to the world of fantasy. As Porter H. Abbott argues, “[I]n both kinds of narrative, the factors of story and discourse are at play, but in nonfiction narrative there is an additional defining factor, absent in fiction, of reference to the real world” (Abbott, 2008, 146). Narrative nonfiction is differentiated from narrative fiction only by its “referential function” (ibid., 153). In this sense, the vast majority of the comics analysed in this sample can be construed as narrative nonfiction in that they possess reference to the cultural context in which they were produced, namely the total conflict of the Second World War. As Abbott clarifies:

Given the enormous arsenal of available resources in fiction, an author can fashion characters into representative types and combine them in such a way as to bring out vividly the moral and practical consequences of their actions. The facts all belong to a fictional world, but the narrative is meaningful for us as we think and act in our own world (Ibid., 153-4).

This point is crucial to understanding the total war role of comics' heroes and enemies. In short, there is always a trace of the real within the fictional. As Jane Chapman et al argue, "In the case of a work which is not an explicit record or conventional source, the embedded trace, where identifiable and verifiable, is a mark of the 'real' and consequently the final element in the transition from product of the past to document of history, the requisite record of historical content" (Chapman et al., 2015a, 21).²

Much scholarship has considered the trauma and fear ingrained in international consciousness as a consequence of the First World War.³ Within the literature of comics, this same trauma led to the creation of post-human or, indeed, superhuman characters possessing the ability to overcome the advances in technology that led to wholesale slaughter on the battlefields of the First World War. Similarly, a fascination with horror imagery and its prevalence in popular culture resulted as a consequence of the same global conflict. The introduction of Superman explains that "no less than a bursting shell could break his skin" (*Action Comics* #1, 1938). This imagery is not coincidental. Superheroes manifested and created a new genre within comics parallel with the outbreak of European hostilities that led directly to the Second World War. Just as the genre of science fiction (within literature, film, radio, etc.) would wrestle throughout the twentieth century with the dichotomy of "something which looks like a human but 'in reality' is a machine" and "something which looks like a machine but can think and even feel like a human being", representations of heroes within Second World War era comics moved from humans who were fatally vulnerable to machines towards un-human (but not inhuman) heroes impervious to even the most diabolical developments in weaponry

² For more information on the concept of 'trace' within a work and in connection with the writing of history see Derrida (1982, 13) and Elton (1967, 102).

³ See, for example, Kramer (2007). For an in depth analysis of trauma and memory in connection with comics dealing with the Second World War see Chapman et al (2015b).

(Früchtli, 2009, 190).⁴ This is particularly the case with superheroes whose theme of physical superiority to machines (echoed in the rhetoric cited above), as well as their moral superiority, is closely akin to the rhetorical strategies of propaganda. As such, it is impossible to disregard the context of the Second World War in any consideration of the history of comics or in the development of their most iconic characters, superheroes. The development of this type of hero, however, led to a conflict between superhero narratives and the stories of real life American culture heroes and other personalities associated with the war effort. This is one reason that Parents' Magazine Press issued its title *Real Heroes* and recounted the narratives of America's leaders and the leaders of the nation's allies (for more on this point see chapter two).

American comics during the Second World War served served to reinforce the immediacy of the war effort to those on the home front whose involvement in the conflict was based largely upon imagination (Wright, 2001, 55). Dana Chalmers (2011) observes that entertainment is rarely viewed as propaganda and, as such, causes a natural lowering of the mental defences and encourages fantasy and an imaginative engagement with the communicated content (Chalmers, 2011, 62).⁵ It is with these points in mind that this chapter presents an analysis of the literature required to address the central research question. Firstly, however, the following section outlines the methodology, derived from literary and cultural studies, of comparative close reading and critical analysis of discourse used to identify the ideology that heroes and enemies communicate.

⁴ For more on the early origins of the superhero genre see the comic strip *Hugo Hercules* (Korner, 1902-1903), Stapleton (1935) and Murray (2011).

⁵ See further Murray (2000, 2011).

Methodology

Research has already established arguments for comics as a source for and record of history (Chapman et al, 2015, 15). The main methodological hallmarks of cultural studies are a reliance on textual analysis and close reading, applied to a broad range of cultural phenomena (Pickering, 2008, 1). Anthony Easthope (1991) asks: "If the theoretical history of the past two decades has made [the distinction between literature and popular culture] impossible to sustain, if 'literature' and 'popular culture' are now to be thought together within a single frame of reference as signifying practice, how can this best be done?" (Easthope, 1991, 105).

Through the use of narrative interpretation and comparative close reading of texts, comics reveal much about the conditions from which they derive (Abbott, 2008, 105). Analysis of the recurrent rhetoric indicative of propaganda thrives on identifying repetitions in a text and across texts (ibid., 106). This, in turn, indicates the need for a methodology of comparative close reading and semiotics. Though the visual or pictorial element of comics often proves problematic for the purely literary-minded analyst, the visual element of literature can never and has never been separated from literature itself due to the fact that words are themselves visual phenomena. Mario Klarer (2005) clarifies this point, arguing: "This visual component inevitably remains closely connected to literature throughout its various historical and social manifestations. In some periods, however, the pictorial dimension is pushed into the background and is hardly noticeable" (Klarer, 2005, 2). The opposite is true for comics. Though Klarer makes no mention of comics within his discussion of the methodology of cultural studies, he identifies methodological problems and approaches that pertain equally to comics as to any other medium within the discipline's ever-widening scope. Indeed, the multiplicity of possible methodologies is often

regarded as one of the defining features of the humanities and of cultural studies in particular (Klarer, 2005, 73).

This thesis adopts a text-orientated approach, analysing rhetoric, patterns of language and visual symbolism within the texts through close reading founded upon the critical analysis of discourse and semiotics, assumption of the ‘implied reader’ and the theory of Stuart Hall (1980) concerning the three possible decoding positions of the reader (explored further below). The various elements of comics and the ways that they relate to one another constitute a unique communications constellation (Murray, 2011, 264). The major methodology undertaken will be close reading that “denotes the meticulous analysis” of “elementary features” that “mirror larger structures of a text” and, indeed, from which can be drawn wider cultural implications, in this instance the propaganda function of heroic and enemy characters (Klarer, 2005, 81). Analysis follows the semiotics of Ferdinand de Saussure (1959) in his distinction of signified (*signifié*) and signifier (*signifiant*) alongside a consideration of Barthes’ (1973) important development of these terms in connection with mythic criticism. It is acknowledged that texts, and comics in particular, exist as a system of interacting signs and that semiotic analysis of the interaction of these signs is useful as a tool provided they are located within their wider cultural context.

Works of art, and comics in particular, are not independent of the historical and cultural context in which they exist. As such, “when interpreting a given text, its social components and historical background must be taken into account” (Lobo, 2013, 20). Though often indebted to Marxist literary theory and cultural criticism, particularly concerning the use of some elucidating terminology, this thesis makes no attempt to present a Marxist analysis of its sample. Rather, the primary theoretical and methodological structures incorporated into this thesis are found within the recent trends of cultural studies that seek to “deliberately [analyse] the different aspects of human self-expression” as “manifestations of a cultural whole” (Klarer, 2005, 90). Comics contain both

a visual and written lexis and this communicative conflict requires inductive, panel-by-panel examination of their visual and literary content in order to “discover the rhetorical dimensions, devices, and strategies of encapsulation” (Duncan, 2000, 1). By the term ‘encapsulation’ is meant aspects of the narrative represented by the writer or artist within a selected frame (ibid., 2). In comics analysis, the panel is of paramount importance, not simply as the smallest basic unit of most early comics’ narratives, but also as the basic cell of communication for the medium. The location of a panel within a sequence forms the basic structure of comics’ communication. A ‘cut-up’ sequence would place different strains upon the reader to make sense of the liminal space between panels. Of particular significance is consideration of the final panel of a comics’ narrative as this panel was identified by advertisers during the inter-war period as the most effective panel for product placement and was subsequently used during war time to address the reader directly.⁶ This device was also used by newspaper comic strips as a method of promoting the next instalment of a continuity narrative or ending the action in a ‘cliff-hanger’ episode of a serial.

This consideration of time and space within comics is usefully framed by Iser’s (1978) consideration of the reading process. Iser argues that “readers must realise the existence of a time sequence in each text since no complete chain of actions can be understood in a single moment” (Lobo, 2013, 26). As such, it is the interaction of the reader and the text that links the different rhetorical (and visual) elements into a coherent narrative. “Iser notes that the world presented to the reader does not show him or her everything necessary, but rather only glimpses that the reader must interact with and realize” (ibid, 25). In order to approach the analysis of this interaction, Iser posits the notion of the ‘implied reader’ that is “invoked when the literary critic makes pronouncements of the effects of literature or responses to it” (Iser, 1978, 27). In order to

⁶ See, for example, the discussion of advertising comics in chapter one.

allow for the analysis of the propaganda function of the texts studied in this thesis, it is assumed (based on Iger) that reference can be made to a “hypothetical reader [...] produced by the assumed role the text had been projected for” (Lobo, 2013, 28).

In his seminal work on comics, Scott McCloud (1994) argues that “in every case our constant awareness of self flows outward to include the object of our extended identity. And just as our awareness of our biological selves are simplified conceptual images so too is our awareness of these extensions greatly simplified.” (McCloud, 1994, 39) This readiness of the consumer to identify with a cartoon image aided comics’ effectiveness as propagators of total war ideology during the Second World War, a fact that was known to pre-war advertisers and later developed by the OWI. In many respects, the high degree of consumer identification with comics and cartoon characters is a contributing factor to the popularity of the medium.

Propaganda content is encoded into popular culture at the point of production and subsequently decoded at the point of reception at which readers generates meaning from the various signs that constitute the codes (Barker, 2004. 58). This encoding/decoding model of communications analysis was developed by Hall (1980). Hall writes: “The object of these practices is meanings and messages in the form of sign-vehicles of a specific kind organised, like any form of communication or language, through the operation of codes within the syntagmatic chain of a discourse” (Hall in During, 1999, 91). Here we can see the practical connection between Hall’s methodology and that of Barthes’ semiotics. “Hall’s contention is that media messages are embedded with presuppositions about beliefs and practices that shape everyday perceptions of reality” (Rojek, 2003, 93). In connection to this, Iser’s (1978) notion of the ‘implied reader’ is an essential literary studies tool in the consideration of the ‘virtual’ interaction of a text and the reader that, in turn, is key to any consideration of the propaganda impact of wartime texts such as comics. “The convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into experience, and this

convergence can never be pinpointed precisely, but must always remain virtual, as it is not to be identified either with the reality of the text or with the individual disposition of the reader” (Iser, 1978, 275).

However, neither Iser’s ‘virtual’ convergence of (implied) reader and text or Hall’s process of ‘encoding’ guarantees the consumption of the intended meaning that was embedded during production due to polysemy in texts such as television and other media, including comics. In fact, it also creates a space for what Hall refers to as ‘oppositional readings’ of a text. Hall posits three hypothetical forms of possible decoding. These are dominant-hegemonic decoding, a negotiated decoding adapted to particular circumstances and an oppositional decoding that understands but rejects the preferred encoding (Barker, 2004, 59). This framework is useful methodologically for the analysis of ideology and propaganda.⁷ However, further clarification of each of Hall’s three forms is required before such analysis can take place.

Deriving from Antonio Gramsci’s (1978) consideration of cultural hegemony, ‘Dominant-hegemonic decoding’ involves the reader decoding the message “in terms of the codes legitimated by the encoding process and the dominant cultural order” (Procter, 2004, 69). An example already mentioned (see figure 1.6) of this reading method by an implied reader would be when the the US Capitol Building is interpreted as a representation of the purity of democracy and as a ‘shining beacon’ in an otherwise corrupt world. Hall’s second form of decoding, known as the ‘negotiated position’ is a contradictory position in which the reader can both adopt and oppose the dominant codes (ibid.). Hall’s final position, the ‘oppositional position’, is an interpretation in which the viewer recognises the dominant codes and opposes them (ibid.). Though commercial producers of propaganda during the Second World War would have gone to great efforts

⁷ See further Turner (1990), Morley and Chen (1996), Davis (2004).

to prevent oppositional readings, it must be noted that every text is open to the possibility of such a reading.

As well as the encoded ideology they contain, comics also possess visual and rhetorical elements that contribute to the characterisation of their heroes and enemies. It is in this regard that the semiotics of Barthes becomes particularly useful.⁸ However, an analysis of these narrative elements is also aided by a recently developed practical method for analysing ideology contained in discourse. This method is referred to as critical discourse analysis (CDA) and serves as an aid to the methodology of comparative close reading and analytical decoding.

As with cultural studies more generally, most practitioners of CDA welcome a diversity of methodology (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000, 450; Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999, 7). Amongst them, many scholars emphasise the importance of incorporating visual images into analysis of discourse patterns within society, moving towards a wider multimodal concept of semiosis (ibid.; Kress, 1997; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). It is this additional critical element that renders CDA as a useful tool in the analysis of comics as a nexus of visual and rhetorical elements. In relation to propaganda embedded within visual and rhetorical discourse, CDA is specifically concerned with the communication of ideology. As with propaganda, "Discourse is seen as a means through which (and in which) ideologies are being reproduced" (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000, 450). As with Iser's reading process, ideology in discourse requires a cognitive component in which to exist as a system or systems of beliefs and ideas. It is further postulated within CDA that there are no private ideologies. Instead, ideologies are:

socially shared by the members of a collectivity of social actors or groups. As the basis of a social group's self-image, ideologies organize its identity, actions, aims, norms and values, and resources as well as its relations to other social groups. [...] Ideologies are expressed and generally reproduced in the social practices of their members, and more particularly acquired, confirmed, changed and perpetuated through discourse (ibid., 115).

⁸ For more information see Barthes (1973; 1982; 1987); Murray (2011).

As such, ideology is an important element of group cohesion and identity and similarly serves the purposes of 'othering' due to the "ideological polarization between ingroups and outgroups" (ibid.). In this fashion the communication of ideology contained in visual and rhetorical discourse is a key element of total war propaganda that also seeks to polarise in-groups and 'othered' out-groups. This is explored in connection to Benedict Anderson's (1991) concept of an 'imagined community' in chapter two and in relation to the enemy in chapter three.

A further connection with propaganda studies is that CDA is concerned both with media language (Fairclough, 1995a; Kress, 1994; van Dijk, 1991) and also with the analysis of discourse within advertisements and other promotional elements of culture (Thornborrow, 1998; Fairclough, 1989, 1995b; Slembrouck, 1993). CDA is therefore an important analytical tool concerning advertising and propaganda in instances such as the direct address to the reader in the final panel of a comics sequence and the rhetorical device of structuring language in a deliberately inclusive way. Further, Jan Blommaert and Chris Bulcaen highlight that although this device of inclusivity increases the effectiveness of message dissemination, it blurs the distinction between information and persuasion, obscuring the inherent power relationship in advertising by implying the equality of participants within the discourse (i.e. audience with advertiser) (ibid.). Naturally, as with the communication of ideology in propaganda, the ability of language to be rhetorically inclusive may also be inverted to serve the purposes of 'othering'. As such, this form of rhetorical analysis is particularly valuable in considering the linguistic element of propaganda.

Literature Review

During the Second World War, pro-war propaganda was encoded into the heroes and enemies in comics. The notion of encoding “meanings and messages in the form of sign-vehicles” in mass communication derives from the work of Stuart Hall (1980) and has been discussed in detail in the previous section. Analysis of comics sources is valuable because popular culture is often intended to affect readers in a two-fold fashion by demonstrating both how to behave and also how not to behave (Sellnow, 2010, 3). As will be discussed in a later section of this chapter, this is a key role that heroes and enemies play within comics.

Comics were a prolific communications medium during the Second World War and have recently become the subject of rigorous academic scrutiny.⁹ This thesis addresses these texts by focusing on a specific function that comics possessed during the Second World War, namely as vehicles of propaganda.

Steef Davidson defined propaganda as “the means by which a particular ideology is brought to life” and identified comics as a medium ideally suited to this purpose (Davidson, 1982, 7). As such, an understanding of propaganda theory is essential to this analysis. Both images and text can communicate ideology and thus serve as propaganda. However, when words and pictures are combined, as is the case with most comics, their communicative potential is enhanced and the impact of the message increases due to the tension inherent in these two elements. In fact, Davidson further argues that this synergy of words and text in comics heightens the legibility of even the most difficult of messages. This makes comics easier for the consumer to understand than when the same message is communicated by either pictures or text alone (ibid.).

⁹ See, for example, Murray (2000; 2011), Chapman (2011), Smith and Duncan (2012), and Chapman et al (2015).

The etymology of the term ‘propaganda’ derives from the formation of the *Congregatio de Propaganda Fide* (Congregation for Propagating the Faith) by the Roman Catholic Church in 1622. The intention of the *Congregatio* was to spread (‘propagate’) the Catholic faith in non-Catholic countries (Diggs-Brown, 2011, 48). The etymological sense of the word propaganda is, therefore, similar to that of the term ‘profession’, meaning ‘one who professes their faith’, that derives from the Latin *profiteri*, ‘to declare publicly’, via the Middle English usage denoting the vows made upon entering a religious order or belief system. As such, there is nothing inherently negative about propaganda as a phenomenon. Most definitions of propaganda possess an inherent prejudice against the practice despite scholarship that has sought to rehabilitate the term (Sproule, 1997, 52). Initially, however, propaganda theorists viewed the phenomenon as inherently similar to advertising and an essential element of the fledgling practice of public relations.¹⁰ Edward Bernays, often considered to be the father of modern public relations, wrote: “The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society” (Bernays, 1928, 37). Many propaganda theorists argue that the identification of communication as propaganda depends intrinsically upon the merit of the cause urged and the intended purpose of the communicator (Ibid., 48).

Similarly, the argument that propaganda can be construed as a means to an end and should therefore be assessed according to the validity of the end that is pursued, is advocated by Adolf Hitler who wrote: “It is a means, and must be judged from the point of view of the objective it is to serve. It must be suitably shaped so as to assist that objective” (Hitler, 1938, 80). Though he makes no mention of popular culture as a method of achieving the intended outcome, Hitler concluded that the most effective propaganda

¹⁰ For a further discussion of the associations between propaganda and advertising from a theoretical and practical point of view, as well as advertising’s location as the link between comics and propaganda, see chapter 3.

should be popular (ibid., 81) and likened propaganda to a form of advertising that achieves success “due to the continuity and consistency with which it is employed” (ibid., 84).

Hitler’s interpretation is similar to that of many scholars and theorists who identify the necessity for propaganda to be popular and generally acceptable to the audience in order to be effective. This view is advanced by William Hummel and Keith Huntress (1956, 2), Lasswell (1971, 185), Philip Taylor (1995, 7), and Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell (1999, 6). For example, Hummel and Huntress write that: “Any attempt to persuade must be in such terms that people will listen, or read, or watch. If they turn away, the propaganda is a failure” (Hummel and Huntress, 1956, 51). This observation is congruous with the observations of Fougasse (Cyril Bird) who identified three impediments to effective communication of propaganda. These are: a general aversion to reading, a general inclination to disbelieve that the read content is addressed to the reading individual, and a general unwillingness to remember the message long enough to act upon it (Taylor, 1995, 216-7). For a discussion of how comics overcome each of these three impediments see chapter one.

One of the most influential theorists of propaganda after the First World War was Arthur (Lord) Ponsonby who published a collection of stories that were used as propaganda by the Allied Forces against the Central Powers. The propaganda scholar Anne Morelli (2004) summarised Ponsonby’s conclusions regarding the thematic similarities amongst these stories into ten principles of propaganda. Of these, two central factors are essential in introducing the propaganda role of the hero and enemy in this chapter.¹¹

¹¹ These ten principles in their entirety are as follows: 1. We do not wish for nor want war. 2. Our enemy alone is guilty of desiring war. 3. The enemy has the character of the devil. 4. We are fighting for a good cause and not for selfish goals. 5. The enemy deliberately commits calculated cruelties. Any cruelties we commit are unintentional. 6. The enemy uses illegal weapons. 7. We suffer small losses. Those of the enemy are far greater. 8. Our cause is supported by artists and intellectuals. 9. Our cause is sacred / God is on our side. 10. All who doubt or disagree with our propaganda are traitors (Morelli, 2004, 21).

The first principle crucial to analysis here is that “the enemy has the character of the devil”¹² (Morelli, 2014, 21). This principle automatically dehumanizes the enemy and justifies a mythic (if not, in fact, biblical) crusade against them that is also, in turn, supported by principle nine: “Our cause is sacred / God is on our side”.¹³ It is a reciprocal element of this principal that the hero be characterised in messianic terms in contrast to the diabolical enemy of the propaganda narrative. This messianic characterisation of the hero implicitly justifies any action against the diabolical enemy as an iteration of the wider narrative of good versus evil.

The second important introductory principle is that “we are fighting for a good cause and not for selfish goals”¹⁴ (ibid.). This principle is important primarily as a justification for waging war against the enemy. This also encodes the ideals of selflessness and patriotism into the wartime hero as opposed to the enemy who is antagonistically selfish and whose cause is, by extension, evil.

Leonard Doob (1950), who served as Policy Coordinator of the Overseas Branch of the OWI during the Second World War, has highlighted nineteen principles of propaganda held by Joseph Goebbels, Reich Minister for Propaganda in Nazi Germany between 1933 and 1945. Doob translated these principles from Goebbels’ diary from the period January, 1942, to December, 1943 (Doob, 1950, 419). Of these observations several are directly relevant to the analysis of comics. Firstly, and in accordance with Fougasse’s observations on propaganda’s impediments, “propaganda must evoke the interest of an audience and must be transmitted through an attention-getting communications medium” (ibid., 426). Comics were arguably one of the most widely distributed forms of communication during the Second World War with a potential American circulation in the millions each month. It stands to reason, therefore, that the medium could evoke the interest and attention of its

¹² “*Der Feind hat dämonische Züge.*” Author’s translation.

¹³ “*Notre cause a un caractère sacré.*” Author’s translation

¹⁴ “*Wir kämpfen für ein gute Sache und nicht für eigennützige Ziele.*” Author’s translation.

readers. To be effective, propaganda must also “label events and people with distinctive phrases or slogans” in order to characterize them with the intended message of the propagandist (ibid.). This is of particular importance when analysing the repeated dehumanisation of the types of enemy. Propaganda on the home front must also “diminish anxiety (other than that concerning the consequences of defeat) which is too high and which cannot be reduced by the people themselves” (ibid., 439). Comics displayed a variety of methods aimed at the reduction of wartime anxiety such as as a form of entertainment and distraction. They do so, in fact, despite frequently constructing their narratives upon various fears, including invasion by foreign powers or the undermining of national principles such as democracy by conflicting ideologies such as fascism.

The fifth of Goebbels’ principles states, “propaganda must facilitate the displacement of aggression by specifying the targets for hatred” (ibid., 440). Articulated another way, propaganda must identify the enemy through a process of ‘othering’. This concept has been discussed and developed by a number of theorists.¹⁵ For example, Jacques Lacan identifies ‘othering’ as a process of linguistic objectification inherent as an assumption in the phenomenon of speech, an unconscious structure of language (Lacan, 1988, 44). In Lacanian terms, the ‘other’ is an object or objectified phenomenon that is distinct from the self. Speech, therefore, is a bridging phenomenon between the self and the objectified ‘other’ to which the communication is directed. Propaganda here serves in the place of Lacanian speech as a communication intended to identify the ‘other’ (the enemy) demarcated from the ‘self’ (in this study, ‘heroes’ and readers) and further objectify them as objects of hatred. Contrary to speech, however, propaganda achieves this ‘othering’ because its message is directed towards an ‘in-group’ of readers (akin to the

¹⁵ For more information on ‘othering’ and its varied theoretical interpretations and applications see, for example, Said (1978, 2014), Lacan (1988), Pickering (2001), Podmore (2011), De Beauvoir (2014).

Lacanian 'self') as opposed to speech emanating from the 'self' and being directed at the 'other'.

The dualistic notion of the 'other' derives from Edward Said's (1978, 2014) discussion of personal and national identity in the context of colonialism. According to Said, the construction of identity involves the continuous construction of opposites and others that are distinct from the self or the group. Put simply, what something 'is' may only be meaningfully constructed by reference to what something 'is not'. As such, "Each age and society re-creates its 'Others'" (Said, 2014, 332). Therefore, in an era of total war, the construction of national identity necessarily involved a process of 'othering' the enemy. This was accomplished in a number of ways including the characterisation of the self/other dichotomy in racial, cultural, or ideological terms and also in the mythic terms of a battle between the forces of good and evil. The primary means by which comics contributed to the 'othering' of the enemy is through the dichotomy of the symbolically charged characters of the hero and the enemy. This is discussed in greater length in chapters two and three.

Though propaganda has arguably been practised by all human civilizations since the evolution of Cro-Magnon man (Taylor, 1995), it is only in the twentieth century that the term has been connected with any negative connotations. One of the most striking articulations of this negativity came from Lord Ponsonby when he wrote that propaganda concerned "the defilement of the human soul" (Ponsonby, 1926, quoted in Taylor, 1995, 1). As Taylor identifies, this opinion stems mainly from the excessive use of atrocity propaganda during the First World War and the writings of propaganda theorists and public relations practitioners such as Bernays (ibid., 3). John Burton further identifies the development of American propaganda during the First World War as the deliberate attempt by the US government to strengthen support amongst the populace for

involvement in the war. Burton argues that this war-promotion constituted a “groundbreaking application of nationwide, systematic propaganda” (Burton, 2010, 35).

As Gerhard Hirschfeld et al argues: “[P]ropaganda had become openly identified as a significant force in its own right during the World War I struggle for reciprocal influence and the attempt to represent one’s own position, as well as a negative interpretation of the enemy” (Hirschfeld et al, 2012, 151). In times of total warfare, “Everything was now potentially propaganda” (ibid., 152). Comics presented, almost universally, the widely accepted polarity of heroes as the defenders of cultural mores, values, and freedoms against barbarous or buffoon-like enemies intent only upon their own evil and selfish ends. In this context, popular culture saturated with propaganda became a way of creating and disseminating meaning in an era of threat, violence, destruction, and loss (see figure 1.7). The exception to this, as shall be demonstrated, is among unpublished comics illustrated by serving members of the American Armed Forces.



Figure 1.7. *Captain Marvel* #12 (Fawcett Publications, 1942)

Maria and Thomas Prendergast advocate a pragmatic approach to the analysis of propaganda. Working from the definition that propaganda consists of any “publicly disseminated information that serves to influence others in belief and/or action,” these authors reject the notion that propaganda exists in a fixed form and possesses predetermined characteristics that are clearly identifiable (Prendergast and Prendergast in Auerbach and Castronove, 2013, 6). Jowett and O’Donnell (1999) argue that: “Propaganda is a form of communication that attempts to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist. Persuasion is interactive and attempts to satisfy the needs of both persuader and persuadee” (Jowett and O’Donnell, 1999, 1). Citing N. Burnett (1989), Jowett and O’Donnell describe propaganda as a purveyor of ideology within the mass media and the analysis of propaganda as revelatory of this ideology (Jowett and O’Donnell, 1999, 2). These authors identify the fact that “the purpose of propaganda is to send out an ideology to an audience with a related objective” (ibid., 3). Similarly, the writings of Ellul on propaganda are invaluable to the contemporary media analyst, as is his interpretation of propaganda as a social phenomenon (Ellul, 1973, v). It is assumed by this study that comics, as specific cultural artefacts located within a discrete historical context, are, in fact, propaganda “made by certain people for certain purposes” (ibid.). Thus, the task undertaken in this study is not to identify the enduring characteristics of propaganda contained within comics but, rather, to present an analysis of the visual and rhetorical elements of propaganda contained in their depictions of heroes and enemies.

Prendergast and Prendergast (2013) remark upon the importance of analysing the interplay of a variety of media due to recurrent themes frequently carried over from one medium to another (Prendergast and Prendergast in Auerbach and Castronove, 2013, 7). However, though this form of analysis is beneficial, there is no consistent attempt within

this study to compare the content of comics with that of other media.¹⁶ This is due to the fact that such comparative media analysis, for example the comparison of Second World War superhero comics' and propaganda posters of the period, has been undertaken elsewhere.¹⁷

Comics and Propaganda

According to Chapman (2005), the total conflict of the First World War set a precedence for the use of any and every available channel of propaganda communication (Chapman, 2005, 144). Products of popular culture were no exception. In fact, during the First World War, the commercial films of Hollywood were more overtly propagandistic than films commissioned by the American government (Taylor, 2005, 186). As with film, these products, though geared towards entertainment, were also created to serve wartime needs such as recruitment and the bolstering of morale. In addition, they informed and educated the populace about important national issues. For example, *Superman #25* (Nov-Dec 1943) contains a story entitled 'I Sustain the Wings', drawn by Jack Burnley, written by Mort Weisinger and named after the eponymous Glenn Miller song of the same year. In this story, Clark Kent joins the Army Air Force Technical Training Command. The tale was a deliberate attempt to explain the importance of this branch of the military to the American populace and to enlisted readers.¹⁸ Similarly, when serving with The Mounted Beach Patrol division of the US Coast Guard, followed by the Combat Art Corps in Washington

¹⁶ Exceptions to this occur in the discussion of the OWI's literature on poster production (chapter one) and the contextualisation of William Eisner's character, Uncle Sam (chapter two) through reference to the iconic First World War poster by James Montgomery Flagg, 'I Want You For U.S. Army' (1917), as well as comparisons with the propaganda file *Guadacanal Diary* (1943).

¹⁷ For an in depth analysis of Second World War comics with reference to other wartime propaganda media of the period see Murray (2011).

¹⁸ See Harrington (undated) <http://www.supermanhomepage.com/comics/comics.php?topic=articles/supewar>).

D.C., the well-known comics writer Joe Simon created comics glorifying service in the Coast Guard (Saffel, 2005, 99).

Part of the attraction of comics, whether propaganda, entertainment or both, is their appeal to the desires and imagination of their readers. They are “Saleable wish fulfilment”, to use Lancelot Hogben’s phrase (Hogben, 1943, 219). Indeed, it has become a widely accepted aspect of the history of Superman that the character was born from the compensatory, adolescent desires of his creators Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster (Jones, 2005). H.K. Leng (2012) succinctly clarifies this, drawing attention to the personal identification between the reader grounded in reality and the character grounded in imagination that is necessary for wish fulfilment to take place. “Many of us dream to be super-heroes. And if normal people can become super-heroes at the right moment, then we believe that one day, we too will become super-heroes. This remains the appeal of comics” (Leng, 2012, 200). There is a reciprocal identification with and projection onto the comics’ hero character, whether ‘super’ or not, on the part of the reader. John Cavanagh highlights that: “[Fantasy] has been defined as the mental anticipation or *substitute* for the actual fulfilment of a wish” (Cavanagh, 1949, 32. Emphasis in original). As such, while the reader cannot actually become a superhero and, for example, the underage reader cannot enlist, the personal identification with heroes can encourage a fantasy that mentally compensates for these limitations. As such, comics encourage a strong emotional reaction in readers. This emotional appeal has been identified by a number of scholars.¹⁹

Though he offers no empirical evidence to support his conclusion, this point is also articulated by the psychologist and comics writer William Moulton Marston (1943) who created the iconic character, Wonder Woman: “[Comics’] emotional appeal is wish fulfilment. [...] Superman and his innumerable followers satisfy the universal desire to see good overcome evil, to see wrongs righted, underdogs nip the pants of their oppressors,

¹⁹ See, for example, Hogben (1943), Cavanagh (1949), Jones (2005), Leng (2012).

and, withal, to experience vicariously the supreme gratification of the *deus ex machina*²⁰ who accomplishes these monthly miracles of right triumphing over not-so-mighty might” (Marston, 1943. Quoted in Hogben, 1949, 219). Marston created Wonder Woman as a form of “psychological propaganda” for a “new type of woman” (Lepore, 2014). She was designed as a feminist superhero who’s superpower is not only strength and resilience but also love (Robinson, 2004). Despite this, her origins are intrinsically bound up with the Second World War (see figure 1.8). Created in 1941, Wonder Woman (alias of the Amazonian princess Diana of Themyscira) rescues Steve Trevor, a US intelligence officer who has crash landed on the island home of the Amazonians. In choosing to return him to the US, Wonder Woman (under the alternative alias, Diana Prince) is purposefully entering a “world torn by the hatreds and wars of men” (*All Star Comics* #8, Oct. 1941). “Throughout the rest of World War II, Wonder Woman fights the good fight, combatting espionage and subversion, even threatened terrorism, and generally kicking fascist butt. She takes on the entire Axis, at one time or another” (Robinson, 2004, 38).

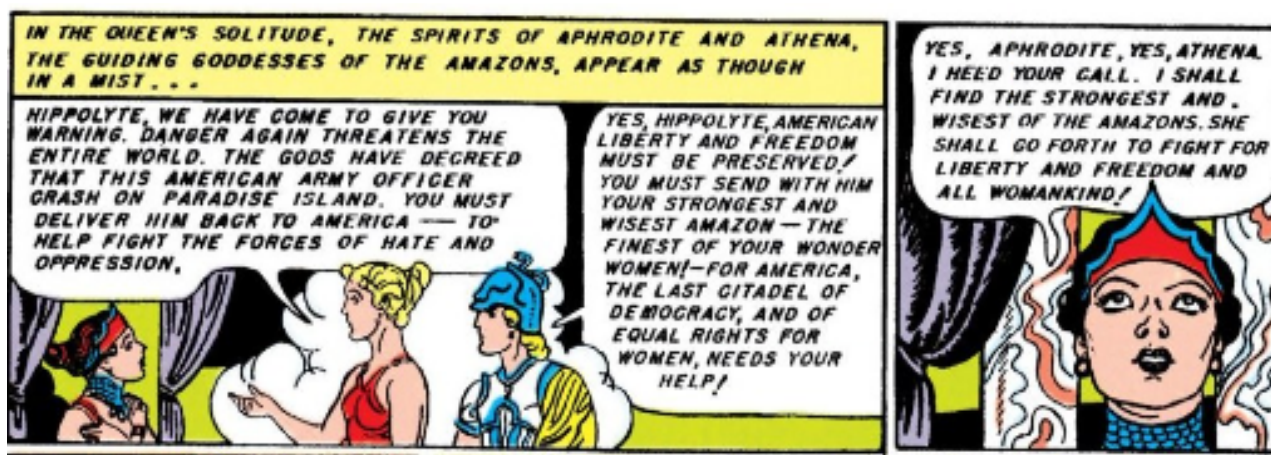


Figure 1.8. Panel showing the connection between democracy and feminism in conflict with “the forces of hate and oppression” (*All Star Comics* #8, Oct. 1941).

²⁰ “A power, event, person, or thing that comes in the nick of time to solve a difficulty; providential interposition, esp. in a novel or play” (<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/51373?redirectedFrom=deus+ex+machina#eid>).

As with most representations of the Nazis and Japanese in American wartime popular culture, Marston's enemy characters are highly stereotyped (see figures 1.9 and 1.10). The Nazi officers are buffoon-like, oafish and usually wearing a monocle. The Japanese are cowardly, treacherous and depicted as inferior to Wonder Woman and the allied forces. These enemy stereotypes are explored in greater depth in chapter three while stereotyping itself is explored in greater depth below.



Figure 1.9. A highly stereotyped Nazi villain attacking Steve Trevor during the first appearance of Wonder Woman (*All Star Comics* #8, Oct. 1941).

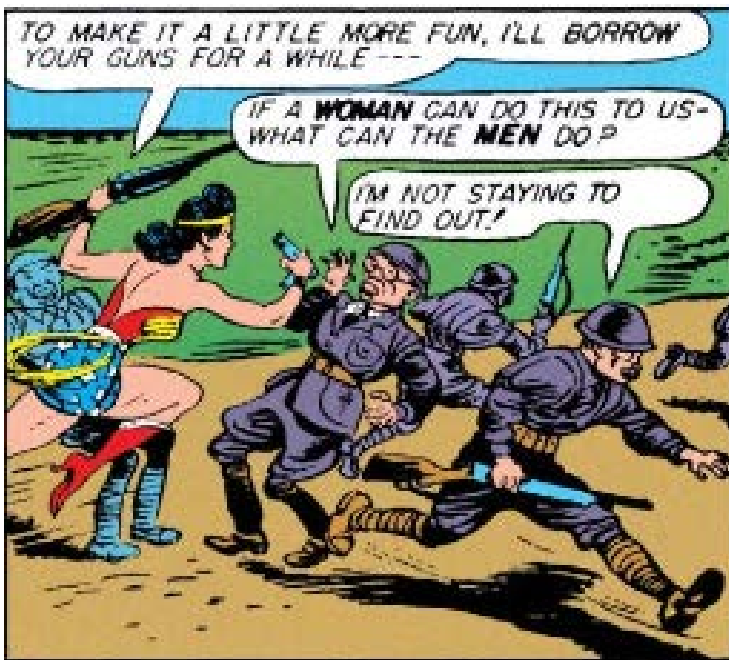


Figure 1.10. Wonder Woman fighting the Japanese, stereotyped as cowardly and physically inferior (*All Star Comics* #11, June-July, 1942).

Marston's comments (above) reveal another important link between comics and propaganda: their appeal to the emotions of their readers increases susceptibility to the messages that comics communicate. As with other instances of propaganda, such as posters and films: "Emotionalism sells better than intellectualism, and makes better copy" (Cavanagh, 1949, 29). Propaganda comics are no exception to this rule. The power of narrative to persuade is enhanced to an extraordinary degree when connected to human emotion due to the fact that both involve deeply-held cultural desires and fears (Abbott, 2008, 45-6). The distinction between desire and fear is crucial in understanding the influential dichotomy of heroes and enemies in comics. Both emotions derive their existence from values, either on a personal, individual scale or at the level of societies and nations. Both, therefore, reflect in some way individual and national values. Primarily, responses such as these presuppose the world as one clearly demarcated between good and evil, where blame for an action or event can be easily allocated (*ibid.*). They also contribute to the awareness of roles and stereotypes from which derive many of the behavioural patterns and prejudices of individuals and societies (more on this below).

Kathleen Turnera (1977) demonstrates that, due to the graphic nature of comics' content, their narratives are placed within the realm of fantasy regardless of any basis they may have in reality (Turnera, 1977, 26). This fantasy is intensified through the incorporation of "unreal" elements such as speech balloons and narrative boxes (ibid.). Turnera argues that the "methods of the medium thus imbue the message with an air of unreality from the beginning" (ibid., 26). Such techniques are important contributing factors to propaganda because of the human tendency to become defensive against a perceived attempt to persuade (ibid.). Despite Sterling North's comments in 1940 that comics were a "National Disgrace", the medium was generally considered to be ,at least during the period of the Second World War and before the publication of Fredric Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954), a form of entertainment that made little attempt to be manipulative (ibid., 27; Beatty, 2005, 113). Comics, therefore, possessed greater scope for influence than more overtly propagandistic media, due to the fact that propaganda will have the greatest effect when the audience is unaware that they are encountering it (Duncan and Smith, 2009, 249).

The following section now considers one particularly potent aspect of comics: humour. This is the element from which their name initially derived and constitutes another essential element of the comics' propaganda arsenal. As will be shown, various forms of humour were used during the Second World War, for example, to disseminate enemy stereotypes and to ridicule cultural and racial differences. Humour, though not always present, was often also used as a direct weapon against the enemy

Humour

The history of pictorial humour and caricature has been documented by a number of scholars.²¹ Humorous pictures appeal to readers on a number of levels. Pictures do not require a high degree of literacy and it has been postulated that humorous pictures, cartoons and caricatures are more easily created and understood than comical text (Hummel and Huntress, 1949, 53). In this way humour serves to make propagandistic messages appear more credible and digestible than similar messages presented in other media (Chey and Davis, 2011, 19). Koenraad Du Pont, has identified humour as a social phenomenon that “strengthens the collective identity of armies and military units” and promotes this identity through a common ethos and “basic standard of soldierly conduct,” as well as providing an “escape valve for feelings of loss and powerlessness” (Du Pont, 2015, 112).

Wolfgang Hünig argues that humour increases according to the emotional appeal of the target character or object (Hünig, 2005, 26). When this character is hated, the humorous impact escalates. Likewise, this is also the case when the subject of the humour belongs to a different group from the instigator or the audience. These different groups include those of an incongruous social, ethnic or national background (ibid.). As such, humour is a potent force for ‘othering’ and, in turn, increases the cohesive identification of the in-group in contradistinction to the ‘other’ or outsider that is the subject (victim or ‘butt’) of the joke. Theorists have argued that: “What binds one group together excludes another, and while humour is essentially social, it is also by intention and definition divisive and exclusionary” (Holman and Kelly, 2001, 262). Due to this, humour was frequently used in wartime propaganda to disseminate stereotypical depictions of the enemy (Vuorinen, 2012). It was also used by soldiers themselves as a reaction to the authoritarian

²¹ See, for example, Wright (1875), Lynch (1926), Somers (1998)

environment of the military and the loss of individual identity that it catalysed (discussed further in chapter two). Hünig also argues that overt violence and aggression are not generally seen as humorous. Due to this phenomenon, the cartoonist must carefully balance violence with comedic implications in a similar way to slapstick film and theatre (Hünig, 2005, 26).

For the purposes of this study, two of Hünig's general theories explaining humour are of particular import. The first is relief theory. This involves the humorous release of some physical or psychological energy after it has been built up to a certain peak level, such as the use of humour to decrease pain, tension or anxiety.²² The second is incongruity theory. In this instance the humour derives from "the disparity between expectations and reality, i.e. the opposition between an expected scenario and the one given in the joke, cartoon, etc" (Hünig, 2005, 27). According to Holman and Kelly, the primary functions of humour in wartime are the release of tension, contributing to the solidarity of groups, and as an aid to survival (Holman and Kelly, 2001, 247). Regarding this latter function, humour allows a group or an individual to laugh at their predicaments, "cocooning us from the horror in a web of gallows' humor" (Coupe, 1969, 90). It also serves to reassert how a group or nation view their most salient characteristics (Holman and Kelly, 2001, 262). This point contributes further to the 'othering' force of humour that emphasises difference and highlights "those distinctions by which we define ourselves" (Holman and Kelly, 201, 262). This 'othering' force of comics was specifically highlighted by Fredric Wertham in his post-war criticism of the medium in his claim that a "four-year-old can imbibe prejudice from comic books" (Wertham, 2013, 51).

Thus, humour was used in comics during total war to both diminish wartime anxiety and to identify the enemy 'other' as valid targets of American hatred. Comics were also occasionally used in attempts to persuade the enemy towards a particular belief. Ferenc

²² Hünig cites the example of a dirty joke giving relief to sexual arousal (Hünig, 2005, 27).

Szasz (2009) recounts the story of the wordless comic strip titled 'Captain Pumpkin and Big Ears' that was printed in a small, newspaper-style pamphlet and air-dropped over Japanese lines by the Allies in the spring of 1945. In similar fashion to George Baker's popular series *The Sad Sack*, this comic strip depicts an everyman soldier being unfairly treated by his superior officer (Szasz, 2009, 534). However, whereas Baker's strip deploys humour as a form of entertainment for Allied troops, 'Captain Pumpkin and Big Ears' was intended to sow the seeds of discontent amongst enemy servicemen. Both Private Big Ears and Captain Pumpkin Head were Japanese. As this example illustrates, humour was used as a weapon directed at the enemy in order to undermine morale and catalyse dissent (Vuorinen, 2012, 58. See figure 1.11). This pamphlet also contained photographs of Winston Churchill, President Roosevelt and Shirley Temple, as well as other Allied propaganda stories concerning British and American victories in the Pacific and the surrender of Nazi submarines to the Allies.



Figure 1.11. Unknown author. From a propaganda pamphlet entitled *Ryukyu Shuho* airdropped over Japanese lines on 20 May 1945. The text reads: Captain Pumpkin Head and Private Big Ears are being bothered by an artillery barrage. "Some fireworks", exclaims the captain. Says Private big Ears pointing to his red-badly bruised nose, "Here are the fireworks!" (Translation accompanies online archive. See bibliography).

This is an illustrative example of the use of humour as propaganda within wartime comics directed at the enemy. There are also numerous examples of humour directed at the domestic consumer that ridiculed the enemy and enemy leaders in particular. For example, since the creation of the character in 1941, Captain America was frequently illustrated delivering a firm right-hook to the jaw of Adolf Hitler or knocking him into a waste-bin with the help of his sidekick, Bucky (*Captain America Comics #2* 1941. See figure 1.12).



Figure 1.12. *Captain America Comics #2* (Timely Periodicals, 1941)

Finally, humour was employed by both entertainment and propaganda media during total war in order to advance a particular argument or viewpoint. Mieke Bal (1997) asserts that when a narrative is deployed as a form of argumentation it fulfils its function through persuasion, distraction or humour at the expense of the opponent (Bal, 1997, 220). In the case of comics, such humour will occur at the expense of the enemy or to justify the actions of the hero. In order to understand more fully the significance of war era comics in regard to propaganda, it is essential to analyse the core elements of their war time narratives: the interplay of their central characters, heroes and enemies.

Heroes and Enemies

Mike Alsford (2010) argues that both heroes and enemies serve as “iconic receptacles” for a variety of wide-ranging cultural values (Alsford, 2010, 10). They create, as well as embody, the national and personal aspirations and fears of their readers (ibid). As such, the heroes and enemies created by any given society reflect a vast number of factors, including cultural currents and prejudices that the public may not be consciously aware of (ibid.)

The etymology of the word ‘hero’ is curious in that it was not found in the English vernacular until the 16th century when it meant “illustrious warrior” and did not develop the modern connotation of “man admired for his great deeds and noble qualities” until the 17th century (Synnott, 2009, 100). However, in the original Greek it meant god or demi-god, or “a man with super-human qualities” and possessed the same linguistic root as the Latin *servare* meaning to save, deliver, serve or protect (ibid.). Within this etymology can be seen all the major contemporary attributes associated with the hero in comics.

The term 'enemy' etymologically derives from the Latin conjugation of *in*, meaning 'not', and *amicus*, meaning 'friend'. *Inimicus* entered into Middle English as 'enemy' through the Old French term *enemi*. Thus, the etymology of the term itself indicates the 'othering' factor inherent in the very existence of enemies in contrast with an 'in-group' or, in the literal sense of the Latin root, 'friends'.

Similarly, the etymology of the term 'villain' is also curious. As much of the literature on the subject of the enemy actually refers to the 'villain', this term must also be considered. It should be noted at this stage that the term 'enemy' is used in this thesis predominantly in reference to groups opposing the forces of the United States (i.e. the Nazis and Japanese, including their leaders) whereas the term 'villain' proliferates in instances where there is an individual character who is directly opposed to an individual hero, usually a 'superhero' (such as occurs in *Uncle Sam Quarterly*). Originally, the term 'villain' signified a 'farm-labourer'. This derives from the Medieval Latin word for a farm worker, *vīllānus* from *villa*, meaning 'farming estate'. The term entered Middle English as *vilein* or *villain* from Old French and denoted a peasant or serf bound, under the feudal system, to serve a lord in exchange for occupying and farming an area of land. "In English it was at first merely a description of a particular station in life, replacing the native word churl" (Mitchell, 1908, 228). Linda and Roger Flavell clarify how this term came to possess its negative associations with evil and criminal behaviour: "Such social inferiors were generally despised by those of a higher class. Low-birth meant base instincts, lack of moral judgement and a natural inclination to wrongdoing" (Flavell and Flavell, 1995, 258-9).

Anthony Synnott has highlighted that the core meaning of the character of the (male) hero is to reinforce masculine values of bravery framed within the mythic struggle of good versus evil whether "in the wild west, in the trenches or in the city" (Synnott, 2009, 101). In fact, Synnott identifies this same core principle as a fundamental aspect of

superhero characters such as Superman and Batman as well as the non-super heroes of many war comics and, importantly, the heroes of “the old cowboy comics” (ibid.) By ‘non-super’ is meant those characters who do not possess ‘superpowers’ and are, therefore, not categorized as ‘superheroes’. All heroes, however, possess abilities or attributes beyond those of an average person. This is a prerequisite of their identification as a hero. This important connection between comics heroes and the frontier heroes of American literature and myth is discussed in greater depth in a subsequent section.

As will be shown in this section, the character of the hero is endowed with the attributes of patriotism, bravery and loyalty that are essential during warfare and particularly during periods of total war. As John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett argue in the case of superheroes, the hero is a value-laden symbol rather than a narrative genre (Lawrence and Jewett, 2002; 2004, 28). As such, the hero constitutes a vital role model for a nation at war and a vessel with which to propagate the values and attributes that the character personifies (Hatfield et al, 2013: xiv). Bal (1997) advocates particular features of the hero, such as physical and psychological qualities, as indicative of the potential for consumer identification with heroic figures (Bal, 1997, 79). Bal argues that these features are typical aspects contributing to the “flows of sympathy and antipathy” between readers and characters, particularly when there is a feeling of affinity engendered in the reader by these features (ibid.). This suggests one of reason for the popularity of many characters that have a developmental origin story in which an everyman becomes a super-man, such as occurs in Steve Rogers’ transformation into Captain America (*Captain America Comics #1*, 1941).

According to Henri Bergson, heroes are commonly regarded as “persons who represent the best there is in humanity” (Bergson, cited in Murray, 2013, 83).²³ Thomas Carlyle (1871) identified the importance of the hero as a source of social and individual

²³ For more information see Smith (1964, 88).

influence. This influence derives from the “transcendent admiration of a Great Man”, commonly referred to as ‘hero worship’ (Carlyle, 1871, 11). This nineteenth century idea is often referred to as the ‘Great Man’ theory of history and argues that history is shaped by the influence of heroic individuals. Due to this focus on individuals, it is an inherently conservative idea connected to the preservation of the status quo and the hegemony of the ruling class. This notion is important in the analysis of real life leaders, such as Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill (see chapter two). Carlyle argued that: “Society is founded on Hero-worship,” indicating that the individual who worships a hero strives to resemble their hero as closely as possible both in behaviour and attitude and seeks to exhibit the same values within their own lives (Carlyle, 1871, 12). Such individuals exhibit loyalty to their heroes and it is this loyalty that patterns their social behaviour.

Joseph Campbell, in his analysis of the tropes and patterns within tales of heroism throughout history and across nations, differentiates between religious and popular, folklore tales of heroism only by the level upon which the hero acts or, rather, the ideological level of the action. Religious tales of heroism tend to show the hero acting upon a moral level while “Popular tales represent the heroic action as physical” (Campbell, 2008, 30).²⁴ Comics’ heroes and enemies, however, often act upon both a moral and a physical level. They, therefore, effectively bridge the gap between religious and popular cultural tales as identified by Campbell. In this regard the study of hero figures in comics produced during total war encourages a new way of thinking about the hero as an ideology saturated role model acting on a number of communicative levels. An understanding of Campbell’s work is an important foundation for analysis of heroism in mythology and literature. However, owing to the fact that Campbell argues for the existence of a single pattern or ‘monomyth’²⁵, he has been criticised for forcing many of the myths he recounts

²⁴ For further information on the function and symbolism of myth see Lévi-Strauss (2001), Coupe (2009), and Frazier (2010).

²⁵ The term ‘monomyth’ derives from James Joyce’s (1939) novel *Finnegans Wake* (Joyce 1939, 581).

into this mould (James and Mendlesohn, 2012, 85). Similar criticism has been levelled at his synthesis of structuralism with psychoanalytic approaches to the analysis of myth (ibid, 83-85). Despite these criticisms, Campbell remains a key theorist in the analysis of tropes within mythic narratives and the patterns he identified provide a useful foundation for scholars to build upon.

Across his many and varied investigations into American heroic and enemy types, Orin Klapp (2014) concurs that “the major social types of American society [...] serve prominently as its models. By models, I mean images that guide people positively by imitation or negatively by avoidance” (Klapp, 2014, xxiii). Klapp argues that people use culture heroes and enemies as models for social behaviour. How they do so is clarified by Hall who writes: “In a ‘determinate’ moment the structure [of mass communication] employs a code and yields a ‘message’: at another determinate moment the ‘message’, via its decodings, issues into the structure of social practices” (Hall, in Durham and Kellner, 2006, 165).²⁶ Klapp also indicates that hero figures may also possess a compensatory function, “to console people, as it were, for a recognized lack of what the hero represents” (Klapp, 2014, xxiii). As with wish fulfilment, in the context of total war this lack may be the ability to affect change, rebuke authority, or to become directly involved in the national war effort due to ineligibility. Children were often the target of comics’ propaganda that played upon and imaginatively fulfilled their desire for active involvement in the war (Murray, 2011, 149-168. See figure 1.13). Examples of this include, among others, contributions to the war effort through enlistment in the armed forces, participation in war drives, the purchase of war bonds and the avoidance of black market goods.

Finally, the hero literally embodies the ideology of a nation (for example, characters such as Simon and Kirby’s Captain America and William Eisner’s Uncle Sam) who is then established as a defender of national ideals and the status quo (Dittmer, 2005, 627).

²⁶ See further Hall et al (1980), Morley and Chen (1996), Rojek (2003) and Davis (2004).

Heroes such as these are defined as symbolic heroes and their particular attributes and propaganda function are discussed in chapter two. Heroes, however, do not exist in isolation. They require some form of opposition in order to identify themselves as heroes, be that a challenge to overcome or an enemy to be defeated. Richard Reynolds (1992) argues that: “Superheroes are not called upon to act as the protagonists of individual plots. They function entirely as antagonists, foils for the true star of each story, the villain” (Reynolds, 1992, 51). Thus, heroes intrinsically require some form of opponent to define their own identity and, in turn, the national ideology or status quo that they embody. The hero is a character that exists in antagonism with another character. This character, the enemy, constitutes the vital counterpart to the hero that allows the narrative to exist. Within a total war context, this villainous character inevitably becomes Ponsonby’s ‘enemy as devil’ to a lesser or greater extent.



Figure 1.13 – ‘The Commandos Are Coming’, *Detective Comics* #64. (National Periodicals, 1942).

Though much research has been undertaken into the character of the hero, comparatively little has been undertaken into the character of the enemy or villain. Synnott argues against the misandry of failing to recognise female villains throughout history. This he refers to as the “new sexism” and his writing seeks to reassess the stereotypes of men as villains and women as morally superior and as victims of men (Synnott, 2009, 162-239.) Synnott’s analysis is useful in his definition of villains “as abusers of power” (Synnott, 2009, 249). Likewise, Jason Dittmer (2005) identifies the enemy as any “character that seeks to achieve political or economic praxis” (Dittmer, 2005, 642). In doing so, villains challenge the social order or status quo. The enemy is, therefore, ideally suited to characterising the leaders of opposing nations in total war propaganda. Comics’ villains and enemies generally seek to dominate a person, populace or geographical region and can be usefully identified as those who abuse their powers in contrast to heroes, who use their powers for the good of others or for mutual benefit.

Anna Fahraeus and Dikmen Çamoğlu (2011) argue that analysis of enemies presents different opportunities for the scholar than the study of heroes (Fahraeus and Çamoğlu, 2011, vii). These scholars maintain that villainy is integral to heroic narratives due to the fact that enemies represent deeply-held fears within the societies that produce them (ibid.). They argue that: “The conflict that in the end produces and constructs the hero is the battle to overcome the antagonist or opposition, and resolve the transgressions that disrupt harmony, order, etc.” (ibid.). The enemy is an essential element in the reconstruction of reality into the demarcated realms of good and evil that pervades propaganda comics. In a similar fashion to heroes, enemies are designed to play upon intense emotions and catalyse appropriate responses in their readership. As such, they serve as characters onto whom readers project negative emotions such as fears and sublimated desires (ibid., 3).

Enrique Arenas poses two distinct definitions of the enemy. In the weak sense the term 'villain' may "encompass all metaphorical uses of the term" (Arenas, 2011, 6). This weak sense includes all examples of 'villainous' circumstances such as economic hardship or unfortunate weather conditions. In the strong sense, the villain is dependent upon being a character and possessing active agency within the narrative. Arenas allows that in certain narratives the villain (in the strong sense) may also be a role. However, in terms of the analysis presented here, the "villain is a kind of role that must always be played by a character" as opposed to a storm, a political system or an abstract idea (ibid., 7). Arenas' argument does not limit the enemy to necessarily possessing a corporeal form. Enemies must, however, possess a certain degree of anthropomorphism, be endowed with a "motivational dimension," some element of self-awareness and the ability to effect change in the world around them (ibid.). It is villainy in this strong sense - the enemy as a character – that has been adopted for use in this study. In comics, abstract ideas are often imaginatively characterised or personified. Therefore the requirement for the enemy to possess some form of active agency is not problematic. For example, the personification of the ideology of National Socialism in the character of Captain Nazi (Fawcett Publications, 1941. See figure 1.14) or the recurrent trope of constructing the biblically metaphorical 'four horsemen of the apocalypse' as actual comics characters do not present any problems for analysis in Arenas' terms of villainy.

Dana Chalmers (2011) identifies three characteristics of the villainous representation of the Jew in Nazi propaganda. The "puppet master" - manipulative, dominating and controlling; the "swindler" - who exhibits immoral and frequently illegal behaviour in pursuit of profit or personal gain at the expense of others; and, again in relation to Ponsonby's 'enemy as devil', "the image of the villain as inferior or, at the extremes, dehumanised, animalistic or even demonic" (Chalmers, 2011, 47). The most well-known instance of this is arguably Fritz Hippler's *Der Ewige Jude* (*The Eternal Jew*,

1940). In each of these instances the enemy is always threatening and personifies “an evil against which the protagonist had to defend” (ibid.).

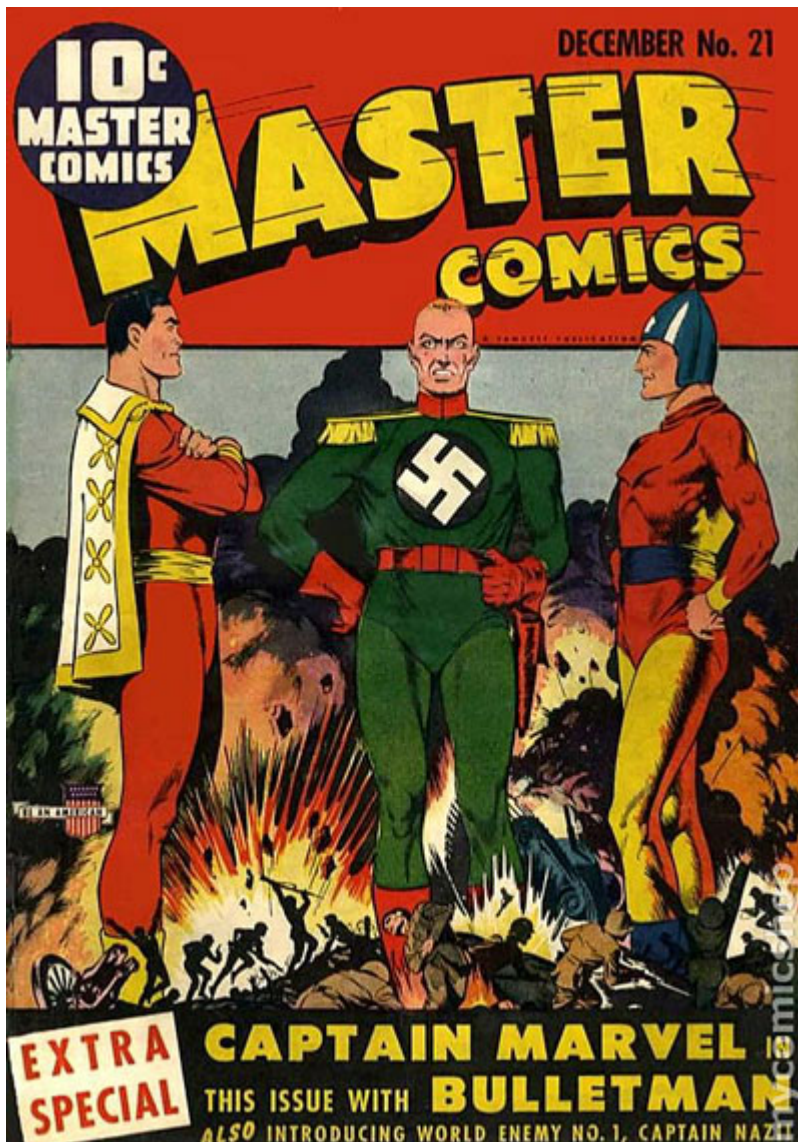


Figure 1.14. The cover of *Master Comics* #21 (Fawcett Publications, 1941).

Comics employed the same devices in their portrayal of the enemy. Randy Duncan and Matthew Smith highlight: “The most explicitly propagandistic comic books dehumanized and demonized the enemy” (Duncan and Smith, 2009, 250). Enemies, both in Nazi propaganda and Allied propaganda comics, were constructed using recurrent tropes corresponding to the stereotypical image of the enemy ‘other’ as well as Chalmer’s categories. For example, while the Jew within Nazi propaganda wore stereotypical

costumes such as the yarmulke, American comics generally portrayed Nazi officers wearing a monocle and the Japanese as possessing long nails, spectacles and buck teeth. Both America and Nazi Germany frequently incorporated associations with vermin into their depictions of the villainous enemy.²⁷ These examples highlight the tendency of propaganda to reveal, as well as encourage, national prejudices. They also indicate ubiquitous patterns of dehumanisation within the imagery and rhetoric of propaganda.

The concept of the Other takes us some way beyond the limitations of the stereotype by bringing more clearly into the frame both those involved in the process of othering as well as the object of this process, and by grounding stereotypical misrepresentations more firmly in the structures and relations of power which give them their binding force (Pickering, 2001, 69).

In much the same way that the Nazi image of the hero is best understood in contrast with the Nazi image of the enemy (Chalmers, 2011, 49), analysis of comics' enemies is equally necessary for understanding the heroes presented within their narratives. According to Chalmers (2011), for the Nazis this was a racial antithesis (*ibid.*). As shall be shown, for the Americans it was both a racial and an ideological antithesis.

One final characteristic of the Nazi enemy that sheds light on Allied propaganda in comic books is the image of the Jew as infiltrator (Chalmers, 2011, 56). As shall be demonstrated, this view was also popularised within American war comics in relation to both the Japanese after Pearl Harbor and also the ideology of fascism before US entry into the war. According to Chalmers (2011), in the case of Nazi Germany, this image of the enemy as infiltrator contributed greatly to the Holocaust (*ibid.*). In relation to the United States, it arguably contributed to the mistrust of Japanese-Americans and their eventual internment in camps across the nation and was deliberately included in comics at the

²⁷ See chapter three.

behest of the OWI in order to justify escalating violence towards the civilian populations of enemy nations during the latter stages of the conflict (Hirsch, 2014).

Peter Coogan argues that the mission of the hero must fit in with the needs of the society by which he is revered (in Rosenberg, 2013, 4). This mission is the struggle against the evil that is characterised by the enemy. The enemy, therefore, represents that which a given society fears or perceives as threatening. As such, the hero “can represent a snapshot of a moment in time in a culture’s development, or a broader sense of cultural identity” (Rosenberg, 2013, 126).²⁸

The enemy’s attributes must be inversely proportional to those of the hero and their behaviour and ideology antagonistic. This is often problematic in the construction of entertaining narratives due to the fact that the enemy must be at least as powerful, if not more so, than the hero in order to make the narrative engaging for the consumer (Rosenberg, 2013, 116). Comics’ heroes were often in possession of ‘super powers’ and this necessitated the construction of the ‘super villain’. As such, depictions of villainous attributes tended towards exaggeration to an extent that bordered, at times, upon absurdity. During the Second World War, this resulted in comics communicating some of the most vivid and explicit propaganda images of the era. The previously mentioned Captain Nazi (Fawcett Publications, 1941) is an example of this. However, the comics analysed in this sample generally present enemy characters that exist closer to reality. This means that the problematic existence of supervillains does not occur in this sample. Rather, the comics analysed in this thesis contain representations of enemy leaders, such as Hitler, and enemy soldiers as opposed to fictional supervillains.

Having outlined various theories concerning the hero and various types of the enemy, this chapter will now turn to the features that demarcate these two types of character. These are their manner of depiction and the ideology and attributes they exhibit

²⁸ For more information see Ndalanian (2009, 22)

in their behaviour. Such features provide the foundational aspects of their characters and are essential to understanding their function as propaganda.

The Physiognomy and Ideology of the Hero and the Enemy

Christina Jarvis (2004) highlights how Felix de Weldon's sculpture (1954) of Joe Rosenthal's famous photograph of the second flag raising at Iwo Jima (1945) emphasized the heroism of the men involved in two ways. The first was through the scale of the sculpture that stands seventy-eight feet high and incorporates figures that are thirty-two feet tall. The second involved a deliberate enhancement of the physiques of the six soldiers involved, including enhancing their muscle mass so that there are obvious bulges visible through their uniforms (Jarvis, 2004, 3). As such, these figures represent a masculine ideal that resonates throughout American culture (ibid., 4). This ideal is one of exaggerated physicality that borders upon unachievable hyper-masculinity and derives from the cultural practice of bodybuilding and, in turn, depictions of heroes, both super and non-super, from comics. Identical patterns of hyper-masculine representation can be traced through the physical representation of comics' heroes that, in the illustrative example of *Superman*, stem from Joe Shuster's incorporation of his fondness for bodybuilding into this character (Jones, 2005, 72).

Jarvis further argues that the American image of the hero is of a man who is physically fit, brave, patriotic and "adored by his sweetheart" (Jarvis, 2004, 60). However, this relationship is often one involving distance and exists either as a reiteration of the image of men resolutely marching to war waved off by their womenfolk or, as more often represented in comics, that of an "asexual, hyper-masculine man caught in a relationship with 'woman'" (Whitehead, 2002, 120). More generally, this distance from members of the

opposite sex connects to the American focus on individualism as a vital attribute of the hero. This connection derives from the myth of the frontier hero and scholars have argued that the superhero genre itself derives directly from the heroic characters of the American frontier myth.²⁹ “Literally, there is a connection between the frontier hero novels of James Fenimore Cooper and Golden Age superhero comics. This was mediated primarily by the late-nineteenth-century dime novels and the Wild West shows of Buffalo Bill Cody, in which the complex circumstances of the frontier and the oppressive violence of white settlers were sanitized for audiences and distorted into a mythic picture of innocent whites taming dark savage peoples and lands” (Mills, 2014, 23).

Anthony Mills argues that individualism is frequently demonstrated by the hero’s refusal of both sexual gratification and romantic involvement (Mills, 2014, 32).³⁰ Both Mills and Richard Reynolds note that “the pop culture of the 1930s and 1940s in general was characterised by this kind of hero: an individualist who stands apart from society but operates on his own code of honor” (Mills, 2014, 29). Mills traces this convention from the novels of James Fenimore Cooper and demonstrates how it became established as an almost irrevocable convention of comics’ heroes due to the influence of American literary mythology on comics during the Second World War (ibid).³¹

Ontologically, the hero was an independent, individualistic substance who relied only and completely on himself. Relationships did not constitute the hero’s essence in any meaningful way and, quite often, were perceived to hinder the hero from his or her task, especially relations of a romantic nature. Hence, sex and community had to be constantly shunned, lest the heroes be tainted and unworthy of their calling (Mills, 2014, 53).

²⁹ See, for example, Rosenberg (2013, 3), Reynolds (1994, 16), Palmer (2013, 281).

³⁰ For more information see Murdoch (2001, ix).

³¹ This has been challenged by comics writers such as Alan Moore in his seminal reworking of the conventions of superhero narratives in *Watchmen* (1986). This work, in turn, paved the way for other superheroes to overcome this celibacy such as Peter Parker’s marriage to Mary Jane Watson in *The Amazing Spider-Man Annual #21* (1987).

Distinct cultures have differing ideas of what constitutes masculinity. Stephen Whitehead describes how a nation's sense of self is often maintained through paying tribute to particular masculine feats and performances (Whitehead, 2002, 122). In the case of the flag raising on Iwo Jima, those involved are engaged in a heroic and patriotic feat that also denotes a certain degree of selfless recklessness. Heroic notions are dependent upon archetypes of masculinity and these masculine role models are either manufactured from reality (as with de Weldon's sculpture) or exist as fictional characters (Moss, 2011, 1-2). However, the fact that de Weldon's sculpture was based upon a staged photograph underlines the blurring of the boundaries of reality and fantasy that can occur. The point concerning the manufacture of a hyper-masculine reality in this instance is two-fold. What is important is that both real and fictional heroes are key indicators of masculine ideals and that they suggest specific roles to follow and attributes to emulate (ibid.).³²

One notable attribute of ideal masculinity is the bravery inherent in risking one's life for others "just like the fictional heroes in films, novels and comics" (Synnott, 2009, 22). Though it is important to differentiate bravery from martyrdom here, it must be noted that physical bravery and the ability to confront death for a just cause is a core component of the masculine ideal (Synnott, 2009, 109). Indeed, comics contributed greatly to the contemporary American sense of this masculine ideal due to this recurrent trope throughout the vast majority of war comics narratives (ibid., 30). Similar to the masculine ideal of bravery is the ideal of loyalty to one's friends. This trope is often exemplified by the 'buddy' movie genre in which, once a bond of loyalty has been established, an individual must do whatever is necessary not to break this bond, including deceit and risk taking (Moss, 2011, 9).

³² Similarly to the earlier discussion of the Justice Society of America (*All Star Comics* #3, 1941), this photograph presents cooperation between a group of individuals as opposed to the traditional individualistic ideal of heroism (For more on this see Roeder, 1993 and Murray, 2000).

In contrast to Germanic notions of masculinity, representations of the American male body were not directly rooted in the Greek athletic tradition but in ideals of bodybuilding, brawny depression era workers, and “most especially, comic book superheroes” (Jarvis, 2004, 52). In similar fashion to de Weldon’s sculpture, comics artists developed a form of artistic shorthand that came to represent this exaggerated masculinity through the illustration of broad shoulders, huge biceps and a narrow waist (ibid.). Curiously, such American heroes closely reflect the original Greek etymology of the word ‘hero’. The hyper-physical, hyper-masculine heroic body depicted in war comics serves as a visual representation of the power of the hero (Rosenberg, 2013, 59). This hyper-physical body is not necessarily connected to the hero’s ‘super power’, such as, for example, their ability to run, fly or transform in some way. However, due to the fact that the hero themselves embodies various heroic ideals such as bravery, patriotism, and selflessness, in turn, physical strength equates to moral strength. “To match the ideas and beliefs that motivate the superheroes’ behaviours, the body must be shown to be powerful and perfect” (Rosenberg, 2013, 59-60).³³ One of the most important visual signifiers of this physical and ideological perfection is that of symmetry. This recurrent device is frequently used in order to distinguish between the physically and morally perfect, symmetrical hero and the physically and morally imperfect, asymmetrical, grotesque villain (ibid.).

Friedrich Nietzsche highlights one other important aspect of the attributes of the modern hero, namely, a penchant to be reckless. Nietzsche wrote: “the secret for harvesting from existence the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment is - *live dangerously!*” (Nietzsche, 2010, 228, §283). This aspect of masculinity has been observed in recent studies relating to topics as disparate as farming accidents (Harrell, 1986), instances of speeding in young men (Mast et al, 2008; Holt and Thompson, 2004), masculine attitudes towards health (Courtenay, 200), and constituted the hamartia of both

³³ For more on this see Ndalianis (2009)

President Theodore Roosevelt and President Barrack Obama's father, Barack Obama Senior (Jacobs, 2011). As shall be demonstrated in chapter two, this reckless attribute is a recurrent theme in the publications of Parents' Magazine Press that contained narratives of foreign allies such as Winston Churchill (referred to later as 'foreign political heroes').

The attributes of villainy include selfishness and the abuse of power and position. These characteristics are antithetical to the ideals of loyalty, bravery and self-sacrifice connected to the hero. Further, while the hero is generally reckless and brave, the villain, when not possessing the advantage is typically characterised as cowardly and focused upon self-preservation. The physical characterisation of the enemy frequently derives its conventions from the horror genre and the feature most often exaggerated or rendered grotesque is the face (Bakhtin, 2005, 92). The incorporation of animalistic features into illustrations of the head, ears, nose and mouth immediately identify a character as a villain. This convention derives from the nineteenth century tradition of physiognomy or "the method of reading the external appearance as a sign of the internal state" (Hartley, 2001, 33). In terms of propaganda, this rendering of the monstrous and inhuman enemy via the visual symbolism of grotesque physicality and asymmetry was used as a politicised shorthand for the corrupting and divergent force against which the democratic heroes battle. This politicised monstrosity was particularly prevalent in depictions of the Japanese, although it was a device employed both visually and rhetorically in nearly all depictions of the enemy (Dittmer, 2005, 632). In this regard and others, tropes from the horror genre were regularly employed to signify the enemy and characterise them as monstrous (for more information see Murray, 2011 and chapter 3 of this thesis).

As has been shown, the monstrous villain is the necessary, balancing antithesis to the virtuous hero. Both possess emotive appeal and represent ideals for their readers to either pursue or to avoid. As has been frequently noted in comics scholarship, heroes and villains present these ideals in mythic terms strongly connected to the political and social

ideologies central to American identity, democracy and the American Dream.³⁴ The following section draws connections between these three elements: myth, the American dream and comics' heroes and villains.

Myth and the American Dream

The etymology of the phrase the 'American Dream' begins with the publication of *The Epic of America* by James Truslow Adams in 1931. Adams initially sought to title his work *The American Dream* but was discouraged by his publishers. Despite this, the far-ranging citations of the term have been largely due to the power of this metaphor in representing the American ideals of economic success and personal development as a consequence of hard work and individual effort (Schneiderman, 2012, ix). The term itself has become a widely appropriated phrase and the values denoted by it, though at times obscure and malleable to the agenda of various rhetoricians, have grown to become both a "lofty" and "immediate" component of American identity (Cullen, 2003, 5).

As Jim Cullen (2003) argues, "the American Dream is closely bound up with freedom" (ibid., 9). Fundamentally similar to the narrative of the hero and the ideals they represent, "all notions of freedom rest on a sense of agency, the idea that individuals have control over the course of their lives" (ibid., 10). As such, the heroes of American culture embody various elements of the American Dream myth, providing role models for Americans to follow in pursuit of the ideals for which it serves as a metaphor. Freedom is only one element of this dream. The acquisition and defence of property and wealth is another. Importantly, this aspect of the American Dream is also fundamental to the ideology of capitalist democracy and, during the Second World War, the heroes of

³⁴ See further, Murray (2000, 2011).

American popular culture were deployed to defend this political and economic ideology against the opposing ideology of fascism (Pejovich, 1990, 18).

It is argued by Allan Kulikoff that an individual's definition of capitalism structures their interpretation of American society (Kulikoff, 1989, 125). Writing from a Marxist perspective, Kierna Allen (2014) contends that respect for private property is one of the fundamental myths of modern democratic society (Allen, 2014).³⁵ Regardless of one's interpretation of capitalism and its connection to private property rights, the acquisition of property as symbolic of economic advancement and, ultimately, American notions of happiness constitutes a vital element of the American Dream myth. According to Margaret Garb, this ideological connection developed as the American nation moved from a principally agrarian to an industrially urbanized society and became symbolically embedded in the idea of the family home (Garb, 2005, 1). This symbol of the family home as a metaphor for the core values of the American Dream pervades the products of that nation's popular culture. As Richard Slotkin argues concerning the film *Jesse James* (1939):

The narrative movement from the illiterate man's poor cabin, to the widow's slightly better cabin, to the Jameses' frame house suggests that the normal development for farms is that of progressive improvement, upward mobility. Its populism is really a defense of that American Dream which culminates in the achievement of the middle-class home (Slotkin, 1992, 297).

Murray (2011) argues that: "The mythic territory of America was, therefore, a place where dreams could be turned into material reality and where identities and fortunes could be transformed by a sort of imaginative "will to power" which came to be described as the American Dream" (Murray, 2011, 8). The term 'will to power' (*der Wille zur Macht*) derives from the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche and is described as the human drive towards

³⁵ For more information see O'Neil and Williamson (2012) and Bowles and Gintis (2012)

achievement. As with typical heroic narratives, it is also highly ideological and individualistic.

However, another crucial element of the American Dream is that rights, property and ideology must be fought for or, rather, defended. This notion derives from historical narratives concerning the development of America as a nation, such as that of the Boston Tea Party, and has come to pervade popular culture with its symbolism. One need look no further than any novel or film in the Western genre for further evidence of this. As Cullen writes: “[T]he flip side to the sense of hope that goes to the core of the Declaration and the Dream is a sense of fear that its promises are on the verge of being, or actually have been, lost” (Cullen, 2003, 40). This fear was enhanced during the Depression, a period that challenged the material aspirations of the American Dream detailed in Nathaniel West’s work and it is arguably this fear that was carried forward into the conflict of the Second World War. It was also used in pre-war propaganda comics to encourage support for American intervention framed by a narrative of ideological defence.

Umberto Eco, in his seminal analysis of ‘The Myth of Superman’, argues that though the hero is endowed with powers that mean “he could actually take over the government, defeat the army, or alter the equilibrium of planetary politics,” he acts, at least initially, upon “the level of the small community where he lives” (Eco, 2004, 162-163). In this sense the American hero character has often been identified by scholars as embodying New Deal principles (Wright, 2003; Murray, 2011). The heroes of comics initially defended the freedoms and property of the American everyman and thus mirrored the idealism of President Roosevelt’s liberal New Deal policies and the central ideals of the American Dream. Thus, by 1941 “the American Dream had become a weapon in the fight against Hitler” (Cullen, 2003, 5) and the heroic and villainous characters of comics had become “a rich and fertile mythic background with fascinating archetypal characters hanging around,” suited to the purposes of anti-fascist propaganda (Moore, 1989, 9).

Arguably the most widely cited comics hero embodying the American Dream is that of Captain America. Reynolds has argued: “As embodied by Captain America, the American Dream equals self-improvement - Steve Rogers, once a skinny weakling, was transformed by the power of science into a super-soldier and patriotic symbol” (Reynolds, 1992, 75). Cover dated March, 1941, Steve Roger’s desire to participate in the American war effort is an example of interventionist propaganda. This desire leads to Roger’s transformation from a weakling into the hyper-physical American hero. Captain America serves as an illustrative example of the mythic function of the wartime hero in connection to the ideology of the American Dream adapted to the purposes of interventionist propaganda at a time when America was officially neutral. In this instance, the myth perpetuated by Captain America was primarily “a persuasive fiction based on the desire of the audience to identify with an appealing image of their own national identity” (Murray, 2011, 78). Yet the development of this character also illustrates the important mythic element within narratives of the heroic journey, the symbolic crusade or the “quest narrative” that lies at the centre of the American Dream (ibid., 9).

Sallye Sheppard (2009) argues that the mythic construction of the heroic journey incorporates the universal “*separation-initiation-return* pattern” of any quest narrative. However, in his work on the mythology of the American frontier, Richard Slotkin (1973) highlights how the symbolic elements of the heroic quest myth are conditioned by the culture that constructs them despite the archetypal pattern of the narrative remaining universal (Slotkin, 1973, 302). As such, the various symbolic elements of a particular culture’s mythology indicate aspects of the relevant culture in a variety of ways. For example, Slotkin argues that the increasing frequency of American heroic narratives in the eighteenth century is symptomatic of the increasing need for a “representative American” differentiated from the “culture heroes of Europe” (ibid., 189).

It is this historical context, coupled with the ideological patriotism of total war, in which politicised American 'identity heroes' such as Superman and Captain America developed (see Murray, 2011, 1-41). Captain America, a 'super-patriot' fashioned after his precursor, The Shield (*Pep Comics* #1, MLJ), appeared in 1941 not only bedecked in the colours of the Star-spangled Banner, but also illustrated punching Adolf Hitler in the jaw (see figure 1.15).



Figure 1.15. *Captain America* #1 (Timely Periodicals, 1941).

This new American hero, that comics provided the platform to enable, embodied the ideology of the nation in line with the public's sense of their own identity (Slotkin, 1973, 189). This mythology that these new heroes created would, in turn, influence notions of identity for subsequent generations of Americans.³⁶ As a result of this observation, the following section discusses one approach to the analysis of the mythological element of cultural products such as comics: mythic criticism.

Mythic Criticism

Mythic criticism is a form of rhetorical criticism examining the content of a text that reflects the key values and traditions of the storied nature of cultural products (Murray, 2011, 85-100). Mythic criticism, therefore, requires the critical examination of myths and the theories connected to them in order to better understand the discourse of communicative events such as, in this instance, comics (Rushing and Frenz, 2009: 231).³⁷ However, the analysis of the mythic element of comics is not always as straightforward as it may initially seem. There is often great scope for antithetical and oppositional interpretations of the same source material. Take, for example Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence's (2004) messianic interpretation of the superhero as a development of Joseph Campbell's heroic paradigm of personal and social development through the archetypal, life-enhancing journey theoretically linked previously to the American dream. This archetypal journey is commonly referred to by Campbell, as well as by Jewett and Lawrence, as the classical 'monomyth'. This monomyth is reiterated throughout each generation in developing forms, one of which is that of the superhero story in which individuals and communities are

³⁶ For more information on the connection between the heroic journey myth and identity see Campbell (1990, xix).

³⁷ See further Rowland (1990).

redeemed by a messianic character who never entirely integrates into society. Jewett and Lawrence suggest:

that this new myth system, which crystallised its conventions of plot and character in the axial decade of the 1930s, shows a democratic face in that the protagonist is an Everyman, yet has a pop-fascist dimension in that these unelected, law-transcending figures exercise superpowers to overcome foes. [...] These stories show that, when confronted with genuine evil, democratic institutions and the due process of law always fail (Jewett and Lawrence, 2004, 29).

Jewett and Lawrence's reference to the "axial decade of the 1930s" is important because the term 'American Dream' was coined by Adams at the beginning of the same decade. This indicates the cooperative evolution of the term in tandem with the new American myth system identified by Jewett and Lawrence in antagonism with the ideological threat of fascism that developed during the latter half of this decade.

This interpretation in many ways reflects the historical context of the development of the superhero genre in comics. However, Jewett and Lawrence's conclusion that superhero narratives show that democratic laws and institutions always fail when opposed by genuine evil is difficult to maintain based solely upon an analysis of the comics of the period (see Murray, 2011). Rather, theirs is an interpretation drawn from the complex interweaving of myth, American popular culture and international politics throughout the twentieth century. The conclusion that superhero comics demonstrated that democracy was destined to fail when confronted with a genuine evil such as fascism, for example, would certainly not have occurred to any contemporary American comics publisher, reader or the American government while the nation was engaged in total war.

Put simply, superhero comics presented a continual narrative of threatened democracy that was ultimately saved by a heroic individual. "Americans needed a clear understanding of the war, which meant simplification and mythologisation on the part of propaganda, not war art that alienated and confused them. For the most part, Americans

wanted to see the war in mythic terms, to justify intervention as a moral crusade, a struggle against evil” (Murray, 2011, 67). On the one hand, contrary to Jewett and Lawrence’s assertion, there are few instances when heroes such as Will Eisner’s Uncle Sam or Simon and Kirby’s Captain America, who heroically personifies the democratic ideals of the American nation as symbolic heroes, transcend or act outside the law. On the other hand, superheroes such as Batman and Superman were regularly portrayed as acting in an extrajudicial fashion in their role as ‘champions of the oppressed’.

Though neo-Marxism does not inform the critical position of this thesis to any great extent, the concept of ‘hegemony’ is referred to in reference to the ideological stance of the commercial texts analysed in chapters two and three. Privately created texts also provided some scope for resistance to the hegemony of this ideology when they were created by American soldiers and not commercial publishers. Further, as the semiotics and mythic criticism of Barthes (discussed below) are informed by this theory, a brief clarification of the idea is useful here. The term ‘hegemony’ derives from the political theory of Antonio Gramsci and is used in this thesis primarily to refer to the dominant propaganda narrative expressed in the commercially produced portion of the comics sample analysed.³⁸ “In Gramsci’s terms, hegemony appears as the result of a class struggle between the dominant and the ‘subaltern’ classes in society, whereby the former win over the ‘hearts and minds’ of the latter through the pursuit of consent” (Worth, 2015, 66; Gramsci, 1971, 333). Though comics could be argued to be a product of the subaltern classes in US society, therefore contributing to the cultural hegemony of ‘common sense’ or anti-hegemonic popular culture, in a time of total war they created propagandistic artefacts in line with the hegemonic order (though a counter-argument could be made in relation to their interventionist, pre-war productions). In this sense, they acted as ‘organic

³⁸ For more on hegemony see Bates (1975), Anderson (1977), Femia (1978), Gramsci (1978, 1992), Salamini (2014).

intellectuals' who embedded the key principles of the hegemonic order, in this case patriotic and democratic ideology, into the comics they produced (Worth, 2015, 67).

The analysis of comics in terms of their mythical content follows two precepts identified by Barthes (1982) that illustrate both aspects of the double function of a myth, namely that which it imposes and that which it elucidates. In this sense, mythical analysis is methodologically similar to the analysis of propaganda. Both are achieved through the identification and exploration of the repeated concepts that their narratives present. These concepts insist on "a kind of behaviour which reveals its intention" to the analyst, though not necessarily to the intended consumer of the source materials (Barthes, 1982, 106). As noted in the previous section, the interpretation of these myths here is based upon Iger's assumption of an 'implied reader', located in one of Hall's three possible decoding positions and using the language of semiotics pioneered by Barthes and de Saussure. In this latter instance the visual and rhetorical structures of the myth/text are considered in terms of that which is either signifier or signified.

Murray (2012) notes: "Myth, ideology and propaganda can [...] be seen as almost interchangeable (or at least co-dependent) terms, and in one iteration or another are to be found in all forms of representation" (Murray, 2012, 130). This thesis carries forward this conclusion. Similar to the persuasive power of innocuous propaganda, therefore, is the power of myth "to seem invisible, truthful, and natural while communicating conditional political messages" (Murray, 2001, 47).

This section has shown how the mythic elements of the American Dream and ideology have evolved to pervade war comics. The following section now considers how these ideals are incorporated into the characters of the hero and enemy through the use of popular stereotypes. A consideration of stereotypes is essential due to their deployment, after the nature of caricature, as a shorthand for ideological and politicised signs.

Stereotypes and Role Models

Porter Abbott defines the term 'type' as a kind of recurring character and continues to explain how the narratives of popular culture come equipped with particular types (Abbott, 2008, 49). He further advocates the conclusion that heroes should be generally considered types that come to life whereas villains are more generally considered to be stereotypes deriving from formulaic and predictable narrative conventions (ibid.; Hogben, 1949, 167-9). Michael Pickering adds that, "Stereotyping imparts a sense of fixedness to the homogenised images it disseminates. It attempts to establish an attributed characteristic as natural and given in ways inseparable from the relations of power and domination through which it operates" (Pickering, 2001, 5). This definition is akin to Barthes' sense of the term "myth" discussed previously.

The term stereotype derives from the history of printing and refers to a cast metal plate used for duplicating newsprint (Abbott, 2008, 49). However, the term has been reconsidered within the field of social psychology and is the subject of much scholarship (see, for example, Macrae, et al., 1996; Schneider, 2004). Hünig defines stereotypes as "evaluative judgements" attributed in a simplified and overgeneralized fashion that can be either positive or negative (Hünig, 2005, 30). Within representations of the hero and villain, stereotyping occurs as artistic shorthand for the communication and differentiation of these characters. Once clearly demarcated, these characters promote ideology through their actions. For example, Dittmer (2005) notes that "Captain America serves as a territorial symbol that participates in the construction of difference between one region (the United States) and other regions (the rest of the world)" (Dittmer, 2005, 631). Stereotypes often communicate negative distortions of what they represent and limit any rational appreciation of a people or race. Even today, as a recent survey concluded, many comics

are reinforcing stereotypes albeit often “cloaked in humour” (Glascock and Preston-Schreck, 2004, 430).

The adoption of social roles derived from role models constitutes a form of self-typing and reveals the psychological content of the individual in their quest for social status and identity (Klapp, 2014, 3). A further consequence of this striving for identity through self-typing via role models is that it includes the necessity of typing others in relation to the self (ibid., 4). The typing of others is the keystone to our self-typing, to the construction of our individual and social identity and the roles and actions that are the conclusion of the process (ibid.).

Patton et al. (1988) note that the terms ‘cartoon’ and caricature are often confused. This is equally the case with the term ‘comic’. However, the three possess similarities that are pertinent to any discussion of the importance of stereotypes for propaganda. In turn, Patton et. al highlight the important connection that all three have in relation to the methodological tool of semiotics, after Barthes. “The beginnings of the modern cartoon are found in the merging of the caricature tradition with [popular] vindictive pictorial symbolism” (ibid., 241). Due to the fact that cartoons and comics share this attribute with traditional caricature, they importantly use visual devices (e.g. exaggeration and perspective) in order to emphasise certain attributes and ideas. This connects with propaganda on a number of levels, not least in terms of social and ideological identity. As Patton et. al clarify: “When caricature is used to establish social identity [...] the cartoonist will tend to rely on popular prejudice and stereotypes to provide the requisite recognition tags” (ibid., 242). In terms of propaganda and hegemony, cartoons that exhibit the stereotypes and popular prejudices of the period thus become an “instrument of social control” (ibid.).

Similar to caricature, Hayton and Albright (2012) note, “derisive, distortedly comical or barbaric images provide stereotype lift to majority in-group readers, inducing a sense of self-efficacy, self-worth, self-esteem, and superiority amongst their membership by

downward comparison with the 'other' (Hayton and Albright, 2012, 2).³⁹ The most important function of this psychological pattern is “how types function within the system and as a system, for example, for control of human behavior, character-shaping” (Klapp, 2014, 7). Thus, character types and stereotypes influence social types due to their status as the role models for self-typing individuals.

Klapp identifies that social types are promoted and reinforced “through any medium which can evoke in the popular mind a durable, vivid image” (Klapp, 2014, 9) and subsequently extends his argument to include comics. Klapp cites Baker’s *Sad Sack* as an important example of this process. Indeed, the term ‘sad sack’, deriving from an abbreviation of the slang term ‘sad sack of shit’, learned by Baker during his service in the American armed forces, has become part of the vocabulary of English speakers internationally thanks to the popularity of Baker’s character during the Second World War (ibid., 30; Klapp, 1949c, 159). Further, the needs of a group determine the form and content of the narratives that provide its social types (Klapp, 2014, 10-11; Klapp 1949a, 21). In accordance with Slotkin’s (1973) comments concerning the construction of an American hero myth, analysis of the role models of any given society allows insight into the needs of that society at any given time.

Klapp identifies the importance of loyalty, whether to a nation or a particular group, as dependent upon individual identification with that nation or group’s hero types and opposition to their villainous counterparts. For example, though often cited as symbolic of Western decadence and destitute morality, Klapp identifies American pin-ups as “[h]eroes of social acceptability” and “models of bodily perfection” emulated throughout the Western world and extraordinarily important to the US armed forces as a source of morale and a connection with the principles for which they were fighting (Klapp, 2014, 38).⁴⁰

³⁹ For further information see Wills (1981), 245, and Walton & Cohen (2003), 256

⁴⁰ For a further discussion of the importance of pin-ups during the Second World War and their connection to comics of the period see Chapman et al (2015).

Similarly, the heroic types identified by Klapp as defenders and martyrs exemplify the struggle between good and evil and symbolize loyalty and sacrifice for the cause of the group. Inversely, a “proper villain has the opposite traits of a hero and threatens the group the hero serves” (Klapp, 2014, 50). However, an often overlooked anomaly of the villain is that this character supports the same values as are promoted by the hero (see Murray, 2011, 181-234). The villain does so by opposing these values, allowing the hero to defend them. “It is reasonable that the “act” of hero versus villain is a kind of conspiracy to make everything come out all right in support of a value” (Klapp, 2014, 66). Therefore, even the most seemingly innocuous narrative of heroes and villains supports and promotes some sort of message or principle of significance.

Though Klapp argues for the preponderance of the theory of social types as representative of patterns of social need and behaviour, the concept of social roles has gained preference within contemporary academic discussions and cultural theory. Role theory argues that roles, adopted from exemplary cultural figures, constitute key elements within the structure of society and the behaviour of the individuals who compose that society (Arditi, 1987, 565). Roles are “prime constituents of social reality” and provide a category that contains the antagonism of the individual and the collective (ibid., 569).

Inherent in discussions of roles that influence patterns of behaviour are notions of self, morality, and the alienation of the other (ibid., 570). George Ardití further argues that, while social types are representative of individual characters, each of these individuals adapts the roles that they perform to the ever changing situations in which they find themselves (ibid., 572). This phenomenon allows us to adapt to the expectations of others and the changing needs of particular situations. Thus, an individual typed as a coward may exemplify opposite, untypical behaviour when the context necessitates bravery. This can be seen in an abundance of popular narratives, particularly during wartime. For example, this pattern occurs in the narrative of the ‘reluctant hero’ who rises beyond their

initially negative type to eventually achieve heroic status. While the theory of types provides the foundation for identification with particular role models, the actual roles played by an individual may be adapted to particular situations. It is this tension between social type, context and role that patterns behaviour. Michael Carroll for example, presents a Freudian analysis of the type of the clever hero (or trickster) that illustrates the tension inherent between the desire for sexual gratification and the desire for culture inherent in all human beings (Carroll, 1984, 111).

Sean Zehnder and Sandra Calvert base their study of individual and social roles upon the observations that “people often look to heroes to help them overcome what seemed to be insurmountable obstacles and that [...] the majority of these heroes and stories of triumph are circulated through mass media such as television and film” (Zehnder and Calvert, 2004, 123). Popular culture provides the narratives and behavioural examples that are processed and assimilated by an individual as a constitutive part of their character. The elements of these scripts are then deployed through their behaviours or the roles played by the individual within a particular socio-cultural context (ibid.). In turn, it is the discourse and representation within popular media of what Zehnder and Calvert (via Freud and Jung) refer to as archetypes that circulate and recirculate (thus emphasize and re-emphasize) the narratives of “mythic heroes” and villains within popular culture (ibid., 125). The individual who identifies with the hero or, perhaps, with the villain assimilates these archetypes into their own patterns of behaviour.

Within their analysis, Zehnder and Calvert highlight the importance of personal role assimilation as derived from the mythologies and models of popular culture. Similar to the definitions of propaganda outlined previously, they further identify that the distinction between hero and villain exists on the level of intention and not necessarily that of action. They argue that, “Batman is just as violent as many of the villains, but his means are not seen as evil, because he uses aggression only when called upon to stop the violence of

another” (Zehnder and Calvert, 2004, 126). It is, therefore, the moral qualities associated with characters and the ideals they exhibit, as opposed to their actions, that is of most importance in the acquisition of role model status (ibid., 133). This observation is helpful when analysing depictions of spectacular violence within the comics in this sample (see chapter two) geared towards different target audiences, particularly within a context that necessitated violent action from a large proportion of its adult, male population.

In summary, comics, as products of popular culture, were deployed as vehicles for the dissemination of ideological and propaganda messages during the Second World War. As such, they incorporated role models into their narratives in the form of heroes and villains. Heroes displayed how to behave and villains constituted their antithesis. Due to their form, content and status as a medium for entertainment, comics blur the distinction between fantasy and reality and therefore increase the susceptibility of their readers to the ideology they propagate. Though they do not always exhibit humour, when they do, this humour serves to strengthen the cohesion of group identification in contrast with an ‘othered’ group or individual and aid survival through distraction or humour. Further, the character of the hero promotes the ideals of bravery, loyalty to a cause and one’s fellows, selflessness and a certain degree of recklessness. The character of the villain possesses the opposite traits of selfishness, cowardice and the abuse of power. The hero is a character with whom the reader is meant to identify and project their desires onto. Both heroes and villains are key indicators of specific ideology and suggestive of social roles and prejudices.

With these considerations in mind, this thesis now begins its analysis of the selected comics sample by demonstrating how US advertisers and those involved in the OWI viewed comics as tools for the dissemination of ideology and propaganda. It does so with an analysis of pre-war advertising studies and US government documents that provide evidence of the OWI and the WWB’s involvement in adapting comics into

propaganda dissemination vehicles. The chapters that follow build upon this by analysing a selected sample of texts using the methodological apparatus outlined previously. As already mentioned, the sample of comics was selected due to the recorded involvement of their creators or publishers with the US government or military institutions, as opposed to their heroes' genre status as 'superheroes'. Evidence of these connections in regard to the OWI and the WWB is given in the following chapter. Evidence connecting the publications of Magazine Enterprises and Will Eisner with US military institutions is given in chapter two. This study presents evidence from the selected sample concerning the dominant propaganda discourse encoded into the characters of heroes and enemies intended for commercial consumption on the home front and by the US military. This is then contrasted with unpublished amateur productions by members of the US armed forces (predominantly in chapter two) in a section arguing that these comics present an oppositional discourse that rejects much of the propaganda and ideology contained in the commercial sample in favour of a reified 'grassroots' and community type of patriotism.

1. Comics, Propaganda and the Office of War Information

In order to understand the heroes and enemies of Second World War American comic books and the coded propaganda messages they communicated, this chapter presents historical evidence concerning the pre-war identification of comics as an influential medium for advertising. Awareness of the commercial viability of comics advertising by American companies was later acknowledged by the US government and adapted to the propaganda needs of the nation during their involvement in the Second World War. As such, this chapter presents quantitative data derived from pre-war advertising studies and analyses American government documents such as official letters and internal memoranda circulated by the OWI. This chapter argues that comics were deliberately deployed by both the OWI and their subsidiary, the WWB, in order to serve the purposes of the United States in attaining victory during the Second World War. Both the OWI and the WWB strove to amalgamate propaganda and popular culture. Comics, in turn, constituted an essential element in their achievement of this end (Hirsch, 2014; Murray, 2011; Honey, 1984).

Owing to the often indistinguishable nature of advertising and propaganda, it is little wonder that comics, as a medium that was found to lend itself extraordinarily well to the sale of consumer goods during the inter-war period, should also be adopted by the OWI to sell ideology as the world moved towards its second total war. As Elmer Davis, director of the OWI, wrote: “we believe that the truth is on our side, we believe the United States has a good story to tell, a convincing and heartening story, and we are going to go on telling that story, and the same story, at home and abroad by whatever means we find likely to bring results” (Elmer Davis, 1943, 14). Here Davis is referring to the OWI’s ‘strategy of truth’, the intention of which was to increase understanding of the American war effort by the propagation of “information only, leaving interpretation and explanation to others”

(Culbert, 1986, v). This strategy, however, did not actually involve telling the whole truth in cases where that might be detrimental to the primary aim of selling the war to the American people (ibid., vi). The 'strategy of truth' was inherited from the OWI's predecessor, the Office of Facts and Figures (OFF).

By making the distinction between information and propaganda, Roosevelt resolved to tackle the problem of propaganda from the opposite direction [from direct manipulation]: Rather than give the American public inflammatory and manipulative propaganda, he would ideally (if not in practice) give them facts and let them draw their own conclusions about the evils of fascism. In light of this the OFF's chief mandate was to present the facts pertaining to the international crisis to the American people and to co-ordinate the growing and confusing mass of information that was being generated by various government departments. This was, in effect, a "strategy of truth," but whether it would be effective as propaganda remained to be seen (Murray, 2011, 55).

As will be shown, it was realized by the OWI that comics provided a prolific means of telling "a convincing and heartening story" about the war "at home and abroad" that was deemed highly "likely to bring results" (Davis, 1943).

Cartoons and comic strips were, at the time, one of the most popular elements of newspaper and magazine content. This means that they were often employed as a summary or introduction to the main editorial stance of the publication. This fact increased the reader's knowledge of the content of the publication. In connection with the quotation from Davis (1943) above, they aided the repetition and retention of the "good story" that the US strove to tell during the Second World War, directly through propaganda and encoded into popular culture. This continual repetition constituted an important factor within the ideological discourse presented by propaganda (Abbott, 2008, 105; Blommert and Bulcaen, 2000, 450; van Dijk, 1995, 29; Doob, 1950, 435).

Comics possess distinct advantages over other propaganda media and artefacts of popular culture such as posters and films. Primarily, their extremely high levels of circulation meant that they potentially reached the largest American audience of any print

medium. The following section analyses pre-war literature on the adaption of comics to the purposes of advertising. The final section of this chapter will trace the development of the medium from one identified by both publishers and manufacturers in the pre-war period as a potent communicative vehicle for advertising into one adapted to the total war need for propaganda. It also presents evidence of the close cooperation between the OWI, WWB and publishers of comics (such as Parents' Magazine Press), as well as the efforts undertaken by the OWI to deploy comics for communicative purposes within their own published literature.

The Value of Comics as Advertising Media

Much research conducted by American advertising companies and commercial journals in the years prior to US entry into the Second World War was concerned with the effectiveness of comics as a medium for selling a variety of products. At this time, comic strip advertising was a comparatively new phenomenon compared to entertainment or editorial comics. Hirsch (2014) in accordance with John Fiske (2010) writes that "the [WWB] decided to utilize comic books to influence popular perceptions [...] without conducting any analysis of how and to what extent readers actually absorbed messages encoded within comic books" (Hirsch, 2014, 459). However, the following sections provide evidence that demonstrates Hirsch's postulation is inaccurate. Although the WWB did indeed utilize comic books for propaganda, the use of comics within their own literature on effective propaganda demonstrates their awareness or the readers' assimilation of this content.

In 1935, Andrew Howe published an analysis of comic strip advertising techniques that highlighted how the story-telling element of strips is extremely simple yet nonetheless

PANEL 1:

YOU OUGHT TO BE ASHAMED, FRANK. IT REALLY WASN'T HER FAULT YOUR SHIRTS LOOK DINGY

PANEL 2:

I'M SORRY DEAR—I DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT YOUR FEELINGS. BUT I THOUGHT—WITH A NICE NEW WASHER AND EVERYTHING—

PANEL 3:

THE WASHER WORKS FINE. SO THERE MUST BE ANOTHER REASON WHY YOUR SHIRTS WEREN'T NICE AND WHITE

AND DO YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY YOUNG LADY?

PANEL 4:

WHAT ARE YOU USING THIS FOR? DON'T YOU KNOW THAT THE MAKERS OF 84 FRANCHES WASHING MACHINES RECOMMEND RINSO?

ONE WEEK LATER

SURPRISE! FLOWERS FOR THE SWEETEST WIFE IN THE WORLD

I HAVE A BIGGER SURPRISE! LOOK, FRANK—I USED RINSO TODAY. YOUR SHIRTS ARE 4 OR 5 SHADES WHITER.

Rinso Soap Advertisement Text:

"Safe for finest cottons and linens," says Mrs. Wm. Vollmer, 417 Newman St.

I thought it didn't make any difference what kind of soap I used in my washing clothes until today. Since I changed to Rinso I realize how many more from my wardrobe stand up better than before they really do. Clothes are clean, white as cotton, so to speak. I now know for the week, for always and for all clothing."

MRS. WM. VOLLMER,
417 NEWMAN ST., B'klyn., Pa.

Rinso is just as wonderful for soft washing. Its disinfectant safety and ease of use get clothes whiter and brighter without scrubbing or bleaching. Clothes last two or three times longer this way. Clean laundry ready for domestic wear. Tested and approved by Good Housekeeping Institute.

A. ROSENBERG CO. LONDON, ENGLAND, INC.

THE BIGGEST-SELLING PACKAGE SOAP IN AMERICA

Figure 2.1. A typical Rinso advertisement in the comics format, reprinted in *The Printer's Ink*, 1935

Though this example contains little action other than a domestic melodrama, it should be noted that this narrative is designed to sell a domestic product. The conflict involved in the limited action is resolved by the wife's purchase of Rinso and her incorporation of this product into her cleaning routine that renders her husband's shirts "4 or 5 shades whiter" (panel 5). In terms of popular mythology, this narrative centers around (and reinforces) the myth of the domestic roles of the period. The dominance of the husband is signified by the body language of the second panel in which the wife is 'looking up' at her spouse, her face supported by his hand. The developing importance of domestic technology is indicated through the reference to the "new washer", although such an appliance is insufficient to bring about domestic bliss unless it is paired with the correct cleaning product, Rinso.

The effectiveness of this form of advertising was not only realized by commercial companies but also by the publishers of comics as well. Ben Duffy (1939) explained that when the sales of the General Foods product Grape Nuts levelled off in the mid 1930s, the director, Ralph Starr Butler, was approached by representatives of the Hearst newspapers syndicate to enquire if Butler was interested in purchasing advertising space in the comics section of their Sunday editions. Due to the great range of reader appeal and the "new means of telling an old story" that comics represented, the campaign proved to be an immediate success (Duffy, 1939, 16-19). The resulting sales were sufficient to influence General Foods to double their advertising space in comics the following year (ibid.). This provides important evidence concerning the adult appeal of these special sections in newspapers and it was quickly noted by other publishers and manufacturers that comics lent themselves readily to the interests of national advertisers due to their great reader interest and "pulling power" (ibid., 251).

In 1940, Ross Federal published a survey in *Sales Management* indicating that "nine out of ten adults are [comics] addicts whatever their income, three out of four

succumbing seven days a week. Readers of advertising comics display a high loyalty to products advertised” (*Sales Management*, 1940, 28). The enthusiasm for comics exhibited by those taking part in the survey “actually came as a great surprise, even to experienced interviewers” (ibid.). In fact, *Sales Management* reports that only twenty people in a thousand declined to answer the questions asked by Ross Federal, a statistic which is remarkable in itself and further indicates the popularity of the medium with the American public of the period. Further, it was noticed that comics were read by both men and women (Duffy, 1939, 254). A study was then undertaken into the brand loyalty factor displayed by the men and women who read advertising comics. The results of this study are represented in the table below (figure 2.2) showing the percentages of men and women who read the ten most mentioned advertising comics and also used the same products in their own homes (*Sales Management*, 1940, 30).

Product	Men	Women
Camel	78.8%	73.7%
Lux	100.0	85.5
Rinso	100.0	86.4
Lifebouy	83.3	90.2
Wheaties	94.7	88.5
Ivory Soap	100.0	90.9
Oxydol	100.0	78.3
Tea (no brand)	80.0	85.0
Spry	100.0	93.8
Ovaltine	85.7	92.3

Figure 2.2. *Sales Management* (1940) ‘Percentages of Men and Women Who Use Specific Products They See Advertised in Newspaper Comics’

Sales Management’s analysis offers no strong evidence as to why comic strip advertising was more effective when it came to men than women. There is also no

indication as to how many of these individuals would have purchased these products independent of the influence of advertising comics. However, the extremely high percentage of product use does demonstrate that comic strip advertising is effective, particularly when presented as a narrative strip in the same fashion as the previous advertisement for Rinso (figure 2.1). Sidonie Gruenberg (1944) draws a similar conclusion: “For better or worse, [comics] are more potent than many of our other instruments for influencing people’s understanding and attitudes” and, by extension, their behaviour as readers (Gruenberg, 1944, 208).

Ellul (1979) distinguishes between propaganda and advertising only to the extent that the former involves political and the latter commercial information (Ellul, 1979, 147). As with ‘agitprop’, both propaganda and advertising present images of a reality that is at once both imaginary and fictional (ibid., 98). Put another way, both propaganda and advertising are similarly fictitious constructs containing information relating to, or in some way influencing, experiential and behavioural reality (ibid., 147). Similarly, Paul Rutherford (2000) draws no distinction between advertising and propaganda and refers to both as “instruments of domination” (Rutherford, 2000, 9-10). Similar to propaganda’s presentation of cultural and behavioural role models⁴¹, Richard Pollay and Katherine Gallagher’s research (1990) highlights messages within advertising that “guide presentation of self and judgement of both self and others” (Pollay and Gallagher, 1990, 9). Closer chronologically to the periods under analysis here, Brown (1929) classifies propaganda with advertising and distinguishes the two only in terms of what they are selling. Advertising is concerned with the sale of specific articles while propaganda is the sale of ideas (Brown, 1926, 39-40). Each of these theories is, in turn, in accordance with the association between advertising and the communication of ideology identified within the field of CDA (Blommert and Bulcaen, 2000, 450). Thus, a firm theoretical connection can be established between

⁴¹ As detailed in the literature review.

advertising and propaganda and, in turn, in the relationship between comics and the coded communication inherent in both.

Comics, Publishers and the Office of War Information

This section demonstrates that the OWI was not only aware of the value of comics for propaganda but actively employed the comics medium in their own literature concerned with propaganda. Further, through analysis of historical government documents, it evidences the close cooperation between comics publishers and the OWI in coding and disseminating the latter's intended messages.

In 1942, the American advertising company, Young and Rubicam, presented their recommendations on "*How To Make Posters That Will Help Win The War*" to the US National Advisory Council on Government Posters. This Council formed part of the Graphics Division of the OWI. These recommendations were made based upon Young and Rubicam's analysis of a survey conducted in Toronto, Canada, between March 16 and April 1, 1942, involving 33 different Canadian war posters (Young and Rubicam, 1942, 4). Their recommendations began: "Posters can help win the war. [...] They can speed up production, prevent waste of vital war materials, sell bonds, dramatize the things we are fighting for, increase Naval and Air Corps enlistments, stop rumours and gossip, create a better understanding between this country and our allies, and help do any other job that must be done to win the war." (Ibid., 3)

The two primary questions investigated in Young and Rubicam's report are as follows:

1. Does the poster appeal to the emotions?
2. Is the poster a literal picture in photographic detail? (Young and Rubicam, 1942).

Extrapolating from these questions, Young and Rubicam conclude that the most effective propaganda appeals to the emotions because, unless it does so, the content is unlikely to make a deep and lasting impression (ibid.). They advised that the pictorial content should not be an abstract or symbolic design but should represent objects and people as realistically as possible so as not to be misunderstood (ibid.). It is also pertinent to note Young and Rubicam's qualification that the visual element be in "photographic detail" but is not necessarily required to be a photograph (ibid.). This opens an important space for American visual artists, and comics artists in particular, to deploy their skills in the service of the US war effort.

Application of these communications criteria to war comics reveals that comics were, in practically every instance, vehicles for propaganda that were at least as effective as posters. The sequential narrative or storytelling function inherent in the medium of comics allows for additional elements, such as empathy and identification with recurrent or familiar characters, to benefit the effectiveness of comics propaganda (Duncan & Smith, 2009, 3). Hirsch highlights that WWB members viewed comics' "emphasis on raw emotion" as one of four major strengths of the medium in regard to their usefulness (Hirsch, 2014, 449). The others were comics' widespread popularity, the diversity of their readership, their ability to be understood by a broad spectrum of both literate and illiterate audiences, and that they seemed "an unlikely source of government propaganda" due to their entertainment value (Hirsch, 2014, 458). Similarly, Grunberg (1944), writing in the *Journal of Educational Sociology* concludes that "There is hardly a subject that does not lend itself to presentation through this medium" (Grunberg, 1944, 213). This view was shared by WWB members and communicated in a memo from the Board's executive secretary Frederica Barach to George Marcoux in 1943 stating: "we believe that many subjects can

be handled [by comics] without interfering with their entertainment value while making use of their power” (cited in Hirsch, 2014, 459).

Young and Rubicam’s analysis was assimilated by the OWI and formed the basis of their own informational pamphlet on the production of effective war posters (Young and Rubicam, 3). This OWI pamphlet, entitled *How To Make And Reproduce Posters* (1943), distributed nationwide by the Graphics Division, expands upon Young and Rubicam’s conclusions concerning the visual impact of effective war posters: “The simplest poster is always the most effective. [...] But a picture on a poster will attract more attention, and if properly handled will make a poster look more professional” (*How To Make And Reproduce Posters*, 1943, 1). Importantly, this document recommends reproductions of “comic strips” as valuable source material for the visual element of the poster (ibid., 3). Attention is also drawn to the same observations as Howe (1935) and McCloud (1994), mentioned previously, that the essential element in the effectiveness of comics cartooning is an accurate, simplified “way of seeing”, to adopt John Berger’s (1972) famous term (McCloud, 1994, 31). “To compel attention the poster must be simple, bold and forceful in pattern -- stripped of all unnecessary reading-matter, insignia and other devices which do not contribute directly to the main idea” (*How To Make And Reproduce Posters*, 1943, 7).

The advantage of combining succinct linguistic and visual articulation of the central idea is similar for both war posters and comics, particularly in relation to the effectiveness of any particular single panel within a comic art sequence or a comics cover. Both posters and comics (panels and covers) represent a nexus of linguistic and visual communication. Yet, if presented effectively, these elements blend seamlessly in the eye and the mind of the reader. “When both picture and lettering are organized into a compact pattern, the spectator will remember them as a single impression, just as he does the details of a simple trade-mark” (ibid., 8). As such, and as evidenced by their effectiveness in pre-war

advertising, comics overcome the third of Bird's limitations to effective propaganda.⁴² This opinion was shared by numerous members of the OWI and WWB who viewed the amalgamation of image and text inherent in comics as an attribute that "seemed to make the medium almost universally comprehensible" (Hirsch, 2014, 458).

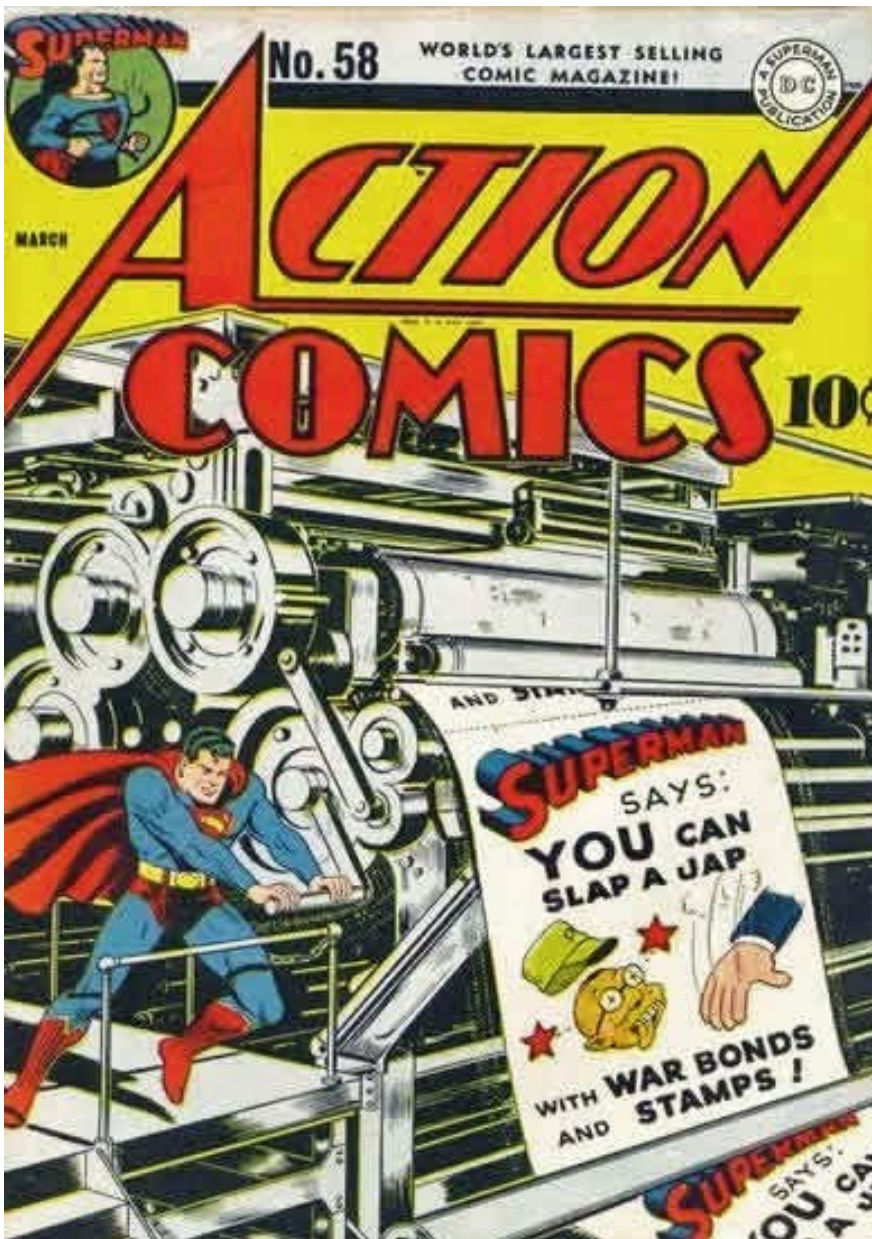


Figure 2.3. *Action Comics* #58 (DC, 1943).

⁴² It is argued that they overcome the first of Bird's limitations due to their popularity and their potential communicative appeal even to illiterate audiences. As mentioned previously in regard to the final panel, they also contain the possibility of addressing the consumer directly. This overcomes Bird's second limitation.

The most important element of this publication by the OWI for the purposes of this chapter, is the method of communication chosen by the Graphics Division to illustrate their own instructions to the readers of their pamphlet. The second chapter of *How To Make And Reproduce Posters* provides instructions on “Designing a Poster” by Thomas M. Folds who was, at that time, the Art Director of the Phillips Exeter Academy. These four pages of instructions are clarified and reinforced by three narrative comic strips, one of which covers an entire page (see figure 2.6). Thus, the importance of comics as a form of instructive war-time communication cannot be over-emphasized and there is strong evidence to support the assertion that comics were regarded as an essential element of their information arsenal by the OWI and its various divisions.

A close reading of this comic reveals the strategies of persuasion at work. The second panel presents an individual labourer in a heroic pose, centred on a poster encouraging readers to “work on a farm this summer”. The timing of the placement of the poster highlights the forward thinking strategy of the OWI as it makes its “general appeal” in winter. However, this “general appeal” is clearly targeting individuals as the heroic, persuasive, role model figure is individualised in the image. The following panel highlights how “later posters make a more specific appeal”. In this instance, the appeal is to “join the volunteer land corps” and the heroic figures on the poster are no longer individualised but, rather, are parading with their rakes in a fashion signifying the military. It is also important to note that the male onlooker in this image is accompanied by a female partner. The implication here is that military service equates to both patriotic heroism and to sexual prowess. This was a popular persuasive device that played upon contemporary notions of masculinity in both comics and posters, often humorously combined with rhetorical innuendo (see figure 2.4 and Murray, 2011, 103-110)



Figure 2.4. 'He Volunteered for Submarine Service' by John Whitcomb (US Navy recruiting poster, 1944).

The final panel of the OWI's comic, in which the volunteer is actively working in agriculture accompanied by his fellows, amalgamates the ideas of individual and cooperative heroism that proliferated in the propaganda of the period.



EXAMPLE OF A POSTER CAMPAIGN

Posters Are Most Effective When Correlated With A Local Campaign

Figure 2.5. *How To Make And Reproduce Posters*, Graphics Division, Office of War Information, 1943, 6

In a memorandum from R. Keith Kane, Assistant Director, to his superior, Archibald MacLeish, dated March 23, 1942, Kane summarizes the OWI's own research into comics' readership across the United States. "The comic page of the daily newspaper represents the most widely read non-advertising newspaper section among adult readers (except for society news or pictures among women). In a continuing study of the readership of 47 daily papers, the Advertising Research Foundation found that approximately 83% read at least one comic strip daily" (Kane, March 23, 1942. Emphasis in original). Kane continues, highlighting that even "the most poorly read strip in each paper averages 15% of the adult readers; and the average comic attracts about 60%" (ibid.). Kane's analysis progresses to account for the thematic content of each strip studied. He identifies that "33% of the daily comic strips appearing in 32 leading newspapers were war-related in topic" (ibid.). These comics "are chiefly used in those strips that present a continued story rather than those that present a single humorous episode" (ibid.). Kane concludes his memorandum with the recommendation that "Comics therefore enjoy a very wide adult readership but only about one-third of them now refer in any way to the war. This suggests that this medium can be used as an effective means of conveying war information to the public." (Ibid.)

Consequently, the WWB began to establish "a symbiotic relationship with many of the country's largest comic book publishers and influenced portrayals of some of the most popular comic book heroes of the day" (Hirsch, 2014, 455).

In an internal memorandum from Henry Pringle dated November 6, 1942, that dealt with a variety of issues raised in the OWI's semi-monthly report of October 15 to November 1 of the same year, Pringle wrote: "It has been agreed that the Magazine Section shall send information regarding problems of the war to publishers of comic books" (Pringle, November 6, 1942). Pringle's information, forming part of the OWI's monthly *Magazine War Guide*, was designed to counterbalance the sheer impossibility of individually censoring the plethora of magazine and comic book publications across the

United States. This reveals that the OWI and WWB consciously sought the cooperation of major publishers of comics. By early 1943, the WWB was sending letters “to various comic book publishers requesting cooperation from artists, writers and administrators” and had formed the “Comics Committee” to oversee the Board’s relationship with comic book publishers (Hirsch, 2014, 455).

Another memorandum, this time from Gardner Cowles, Jr., Director of US Domestic Operations and addressed to Major General A. D. Surles, dated November 13, 1942, further clarifies the magnitude of this task and the role filled by the Magazine Section’s *Magazine War Guide*.

Editors follow the Guide carefully, as a check-list of subject matter relating to the war and suitable for their magazines. Time will not permit them to read many of the releases and reports sent them, they say. They cannot usefully see representatives from each of the war agencies to discuss individual phases of each subject. The Guide summarizes the possibilities, briefly, each month. (Cowles, Jr., November 13, 1942)

This *Magazine War Guide* was so influential, and comic books were viewed by the OWI as of such particular importance that ‘Special Intelligence Report No.13’ of the U.S. Office of Facts and Figures Bureau of Intelligence Division of Information Channels, Section I, dated March 7, 1942, concluded that there was a need to create a similar guide targeted specifically at the publishers of comic books.⁴³ Arguably, it is this identification of both the importance of comics and the sheer magnitude of published comics titles across the United States that led the WWB to form the Comics Committee in 1943 and request the direct cooperation of the major publishers. Gruenberg (1944) and Hirsch (2014) both

⁴³ Whether this was due to the abundance of comics publishers or their belligerence in following the recommendations of the *Magazine War Guide* is historically unclear and presents an important avenue for further research. However, the evidence presented in this study concerning the willing cooperation of the major publishers of comics and their identified importance for propagating war messages coded into popular mass culture indicates that it is likely to be necessitated by both their abundance, importance and the adaptability of the medium as propaganda.

identify Fawcett Publications as a major contributor to the WWB's campaign. Further, Hirsch identifies some level of collaboration from the publishers DC, Parents' Magazine Press, Popular Comics, Standard Magazine, and Street and Smith (See Hirsch, 2014, 456; Gruenberg, 1944, 211-212).⁴⁴

In addition to the information distributed by the Magazine Section of the OWI, the News Bureau also published the weekly *Letter to Graphic Artists*. This publication was designed in a similar fashion to the Committee On Public Information's *Bulletin for Cartoonists* that had proved extremely effective in mobilizing visual artists across America during the First World War. The service provided by the *Letter to Graphic Artists* in circumventing the problems of media censorship on a mass scale is highlighted in a memorandum from George E McMillan to Gardner Cowles, Jr, on the subject of "Cartoonists Working With The News Bureau" dated February 27, 1943: "Through the Graphic Artists Letter, 660 additional artists are advised each week of suggestions for graphic treatment of war information and campaign objectives. Among these artists are editorial cartoonists, magazine illustrators, commercial artists, *comic strip artists*, and single panel cartoonists. Though the work that these artists do as prompted by the suggestions in the letter is not controlled, there has been abundant evidence that they are responding generously and are continually using the suggestions offered" (McMillan, February 27, 1943. Emphasis added). Though he groups all these forms of visual output together under the heading 'cartoons', McMillan concludes that "The News Bureau for almost a year has made an effective use of cartoons to complement its other programs for the dissemination of war information. [...] It is understood that the Bureau of Campaigns

⁴⁴ "The records of the WWB indicate that at least eight comic book publishers cooperated with the board to some degree. I define a cooperating publisher as one that complied with at least one of the following criteria: soliciting instructions from the board; permitting board members to critique and edit scripts; proposing ideas for new stories to the board; or maintaining communication with the board and in particular the Comics Committee" (Hirsch, 2014, fn.23, 456).

considers cartoons an invaluable contribution toward the activation of campaign programs” (ibid.).

The commitment of these cartoonists to both the various campaigns promoted by the OWI and to the editorial stance of newspaper publications in which their cartoons appear was reviewed by the Bureau of Intelligence Division of the OWI in March, 1942. This report concluded that in no examined instance “did the cartoon express a viewpoint that the newspaper did not also express in the editorial columns” (Report 13, US Bureau of Intelligence, March 7, 1942). In gaining the cooperation of the publishers and editors, the OWI and WWB also gained the cooperation of the artists they employed, a conclusion that is further supported by the texts analysed throughout this thesis. “The cartoons studied during this period or any period reflected, almost as a mirror, the editorial trend of the day. To know what the editorial writers are saying is to know what the cartoonists are drawing.” (Ibid.)

The same report further advised the OWI on the reading habits of the general public, highlighting the visual accessibility of coded information presented in graphic form. “The reader’s habit is to look at the cartoon, and then shift to the editorial for greater development of the topic” (ibid.). Though the report presents no hypothesis as to why this trend might occur, the conclusion that cartoons and comic strips gain a significant amount of attention from the reading public suggests that these imbedded graphic elements serve as a summative introduction to the information communicated in the wider text and enhance the consumer’s assimilation of the information presented more generally. The question, then, is to what extent could the OWI rely on editors, publishers and by the comics artists they employed, to follow the official guidelines and code into their products the approved propaganda messages.

Elmer Davis, himself a well-known journalist before accepting his role as director of the OWI, writing to W. D. Chandler, Editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, in August,

1943, explained that “The Office of War Information in its domestic operations is fundamentally an agency serving the newspapers and other media, and to be effective it must have the counsel and advice of outstanding editors representing a cross-section of the American press” (Davis, August 17, 1943). To gain this “counsel and advice”, the OWI had formed the Editors’ and Publishers’ Committee in 1942. Walter C. Johnson, a prominent member of the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association, wrote to Davis that: “It will be a pleasure to continue to serve as a member of the Editors’ and Publishers’ Committee, advisory to the Office of War Information” (Johnson, July 3, 1942). Johnson was by no means alone in his patriotic loyalty to the concerns of the OWI. W.S. Gilmore, editor of the Detroit News, wrote to Davis: “My appointment came when I was elected president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. You may count on that organization as well as on The Detroit News to do everything possible to help you in your difficult and important work” (Gilmore, July 10, 1942).

Furthermore, William L. Daley of the National Editorial, an Association of American Newspapers, wrote a similar letter to the OWI’s director explaining his conviction that: “I am sure that all associations of publishers and editors fully realize the grave responsibilities which have been placed in your lap during this emergency. I will be glad to serve on this committee and hope you will feel to call on the National Editorial Association and its affiliated groups at any time” (Daley, July 2, 1942). That same month, Davis was to receive a plethora of similar letters and statements from key figures in the American publishing industry pledging their patriotic intent to serve the requirements of the OWI, including John W. Potter, President of The Inland Daily Press Association (Potter, July 3, 1942), and Dwight Marvin of The Record Newspapers who stated that, “In any way that I can serve our cause I want to do so” (Marvin, July 2, 1942).

This editorial support for the OWI was to filter through the American publishing industry as a whole, reducing the need for official press censorship by the OWI and

extending to both comic strips appearing in the major newspapers and comic book publications throughout the nation. Thus, the efforts of both the OWI and WWB to adapt comics publications into propaganda proved extremely successful and was widely supported by the publishers.

‘Special Intelligence Report No. 15’ of the US Bureau of Intelligence reported that, “Thirty-three per cent of 61 comic strips appearing in daily and Sunday newspapers have a war-related content” (Report 15, US Bureau of Intelligence, March 11, 1942). The report identifies two distinct types of war-related comic strips. The first “stems from the early illustrated joke” and primarily employs humour as a device for communicating the message of the strip (ibid.). The second: “presents a continued story, one which is not usually comic. The characters are life-like, and the scenes are carefully drawn. There is no particular climax in the last frame of a day’s strip” (ibid.). These observations are important for several reasons. The distinction between strips employing humour and those that are “not usually comic” highlights the maturation of the comics, no longer simply dismissed as childish entertainment. As one of the editors at the comics publisher, Famous Funnies, is reported to have said: “The general trend in comic magazines [is] toward a more adult approach. Whereas the audience we reached was once primarily childish, our books now have their greatest percentage of sale in the Army and Navy bases, both in and out of the country” (Ross, 1943, quoted in Hirsch, 2014). This move away from humour allowed comics to deal on a mass scale with social and political themes, including propaganda and warfare. Gruenberg (1944) reinforces this observation: “I confess that I was not prepared when one of my sons told me that at the training camp for medical personnel most of the men regularly reached more eagerly for the new comics than for any other reading matter” (Gruenberg, 1944, 208). Figure 2.6 by George Baker depicts a humorous illustration of Gruenberg’s point.



Figure 2.6. Baker, George (1944) *The Sad Sack*, 'Enlisted Man's Rag'

The quotation from Gruenberg (above) highlights the widespread influence of the comics on US service personnel. Baker's *Sad Sack* was arguably one of the most popular comics 'heroes' amongst the military due to the fact that the 'Sack' is the epitome of an anti-hero and this type of figure was more akin to the disposition and experience of American soldiers (for more on this see chapter two). Further evidence for this assertion can be presented by drawing parallels with the work of Bill Mauldin and his characters 'Willie and Joe'. These characters were similarly anti-heroes and his focus was on the everyday experiences of soldiers and not on overarching political or patriotic themes (see figure 2.7). "While courageous, the GI's were humble and modest, effective fighting men not out of false pride but out of duty accepted in the face of danger. In Italy Bill Mauldin's Willie moved forward. 'Do retreatin' blisters,' he asked Joe, 'hurt as much as advancin' blisters?'" (Blum, 1976, 59).



*"Joe, yestiddy ya saved my life an' I swore I'd pay ya back.
Here's my last pair of dry socks."*

Figure 2.7 'Willie and Joe', popular anti-heroes by Bill Maudlin.

'Report 15' identifies a stark contrast in the way in which different strips deal with their war-related content. In humorous, episodic strips, the war is generally presented as a foil for the comedy but "the war does not guide [the] strip" (Report 15, US Bureau of Intelligence, March 11, 1942). In this sense, the war provides the context for the action but the strips themselves rarely address war-related themes directly. As such, the primary value of such strips is as a form of humorous relief from the wider 'total war' context. The second, more serious, serial type of "deals almost exclusively with violence, usually war, in the contemporary scene. None of the strips are comic, although some affect a light touch in dealing with war and sabotage" (Ibid.). It is these latter type of comics that the 'Report'

indicates could be of benefit to the propaganda efforts of the OWI in terms of communication serious war-related issues to the American public. The report also contains an analysis of the characters of hero and enemy contained in the sample of newspaper strips upon which they based their recommendations. The following section discusses the conclusions of the report regarding the stereotypical way in which these characters were represented.

The Hero and Enemy in 'Report 15'

'Report 15' identifies the trend in comics to focus on Japan as the major enemy of the US subsequent to the attack on Pearl Harbor: "Of 19 strips of this type in which there is an enemy, seven identify him as Japanese; three as Nazi; one as Nazi and Italian; one ("Terry and the Pirates") implies broadly that the enemy is Japanese, and seven do not clarify." (Ibid.) This bias presented the problem of overemphasis on the Japanese enemy and on the Pacific theatre of the conflict.

In terms of the hero and the enemy represented in the sample analysed by 'Report 15', and as with nearly all non-photographic representations of war-time conflict, the enemy "are quite stereotyped" (ibid.). This stereotyping involves "a collective process of judgement that feeds upon and reinforces powerful social myths" (Pickering, 2001, 16). The report summarily identifies these stereotypes as follows: "Japanese are fierce, toothy, bespectacled and cruel. Nazi officers are bald, tall, thin-faced, with a military stiffness. Nazi soldiers are inclined to be fat, loutish, sloppy, decidedly different from the "typical American boys" (Report 15, US Bureau of Intelligence, March 11, 1942). In this sense, the Japanese were represented as a savage, alien and entirely 'other' race whose despicable methods displayed little regard for morality or the modern conventions of warfare. This was

very much in line with the dominant propaganda narrative in the US concerning Japan's 'sneak' attack on Pearl Harbor and indicative of contemporaneous racial and cultural prejudices. The Nazis are presented as pompous, selfish, and arrogant, desiring power over the world and pursuing hatred as a primary motivating force. In this regard comics, as a medium in which such stereotypical depictions were ubiquitous, were already politicised in accordance with the aim of the WWB to weave "propaganda into popular culture to fuel hatred" of the enemy (Hirsch, 2014, 451).

These representations stand in contrast to the hero character of the American narrative, the typical American soldier fighting to uphold the notions of truth, freedom, and the democratic ideals of the United States. This contrast in representation leaves no ambiguity, even at a cursory glance, as to exactly who the heroes and enemies of the narrative are. "The national comic book war effort, much like the real one, left no room for ambiguity or debate on most issues" (Wright, 2001, 44). As H. Paymans (1976) explains in his study of the propagandistic aspects of comic books: "In this moral frame there can be no doubt that the politics the Americans are defending are as good as the heroes themselves. The problem of good men fighting for a bad cause does not exist on this level." (Paymans, 1976, 228) As has been outlined previously, these conclusions are entirely in accordance with Ponsonby's observation that propaganda must promote the message that "we are fighting for a good cause and not selfish goals" (Morelli, 2014).

Importantly, 'Report 15' concludes that in the comic strips that it analysed, for all their realistic characters, equipment and background scenery, "Representations of actual warfare lack violence" ('Report 15', US Bureau of Intelligence, March 11, 1942). They therefore do not represent military conflict accurately, regardless of how realistic their content may appear. As will be shown in the following chapter, this conclusion was not necessarily the case across all comics publications, particularly in comic books and especially in comic books created for an adult audience.

Despite later focus on the Japanese as the primary enemy of the American war narrative, comics had been focused on war since the advent of Superman in 1938. In the years before Pearl Harbor, “the struggle against the Rome-Berlin Axis became the main topic of all action-oriented comics” (Gabilliet, 2010, 22). Indeed, Gabilliet argues that it was this backdrop of the international war arena that catalyzed the development of the superhero narrative and lead to the increasing popularity of the genre as the war progressed (ibid.).⁴⁵ For example, the opening two-part story introducing Superman (*Action Comics #1* and *#2*, 1938) centres around the hero teaching a corrupt war profiteer the human cost of war (see figure 2.8). This moralistic narrative is self-consciously and contemporaneously connected to the start of the Second World War. Alternatively, Milton Caniff's highly influential comic strip, *Terry and the Pirates*, was focused on the Japanese occupation of China during the second Sino-Japanese War (1931-1945) before later engaging directly in the war against the Japanese (for more on this see chapter 3).

Chapter Conclusion

As shown so far, both the emotive appeal of comics, whether comic strips or comic books, and their development of realistic devices of representation are powerful aspects of visual and rhetorical propaganda essentially similar to those outlined by Young and Rubicam in their analysis of effective war posters. Analysis by American advertisers in the inter-war period led to the widespread acknowledgement of comics as an effective medium for the communication of ideology and the sale of commercial products. The United States government, under the auspices of the OWI and WWB, identified comics as an effective

⁴⁵ The argument that the superhero, specifically the character Superman, developed as a reaction to the mechanized carnage of the First World War has been outlined in the previous chapter.

vehicle for the dissemination of wartime propaganda messages. This was due to their popularity, content, widespread distribution, range of readership, entertainment value, and the narrative factors inherent in the medium.



Figure 2.8. Page from *Action Comics* #2 (DC, 1938).

This chapter has demonstrated the extremely high daily readership of comics in the United States leading up to and during the Second World War. It has also shown that comics were felt to be an extraordinarily effective means of propagating information once the relationship between the offices of the US government and comic book publishers had been established. It has also demonstrated that comics were used within American government publications themselves to communicate information about the propagation of wartime messages. Finally, it has been shown that the OWI were aware of the stereotyped depictions of both the hero and the enemy that occurred in comics. During the Second World War, comics developed into a medium capable of addressing important political and social themes such as war-related content. At the same time the American government, with the aid of the major comics publishers, placed propaganda messages masked as entertainment into their comics. Simply stated, the American government was consciously aware of comics' wartime potential and actively deployed them to serve as propaganda throughout the conflict.

It has been established that the American government, aided by the publishers of comics, used comics to propagate wartime communication. The following chapters analyse the categories of the hero and enemy in accordance with the attributes they exhibit in particular roles. This is achieved by examining the content of a selected sample of comics by publishers that cooperated with the OWI and the US military to produce comics that were designed for commercial consumption both on the home front and by soldiers on the front line. These comics are then contrasted (mostly in the following chapter) with unpublished material created by soldiers themselves.

2. Types of Hero in Second World War American Comics

The previous chapter demonstrated both the OWI's regard for comics as a wartime propaganda medium and their collaboration with a number of comics publishers. This chapter examines the attributes of heroism contained within a sample of comics by Parents' Magazine Press, Street and Smith and William Eisner during the Second World War. In doing so it posits three main, overlapping hero types into which their protagonists can be grouped. These are the political hero, the symbolic hero and the soldier hero. The first category contains a number of attributes unique to the representation of leadership in American comics such as foreign language acquisition, horsemanship and foresight. The other two categories encapsulate the heroic attributes of bravery, patriotism, loyalty and a certain degree of recklessness but they differ in the role played by the hero in the narrative. Interestingly, recklessness is also used by Parents' Magazine to characterize the foreign political heroes of America's allies. As evidenced in the previous chapter, Parents' Magazine Press worked closely with the OWI to propagate messages useful to the war effort by encoding them into their comics.

The term 'political hero' refers to a real life leader of a nation or branch of the Armed forces. This category is limited to political leaders who have existed in reality. The soldier hero category is restricted to characters, fictional or otherwise, who are depicted in active combat roles. This definition excludes heroes such as General Wavell and the youthful military exploits of Chang Kai-Shek and Winston Churchill who are categorised as political heroes. Symbolic heroes are those heroes who are considered to embody or personify the ideology or principles of a nation whether fictional, as in the case of Will Eisner's Uncle Sam, or actual, as in the figure of Sun Yat-sen. All of these figures are discussed further below.

This chapter begins with an analysis of the category of the political hero and the attributes of heroism specific to this group. The chapter will then analyse the two other types of hero, the symbolic hero and the soldier hero by providing evidence of recurrent tropes in their characterisation. The category of the soldier hero is also shown to contain the attribute of spectacular violence, a characteristic usually assigned to the enemy. The hero will normally only use limited violence in defence as is shown in the behaviour of the symbolic hero. Spectacular violence, it is argued, is assigned to the soldier hero due to the aggressive requirement to kill the enemy necessitated by war. This chapter then presents the argument that each of the three heroic categories are recurrently depicted in cooperation, despite an unresolved tension between real and fictional heroes. This cooperation is due to the requirements of the American nation engaged in total war due to the fact that all three elements are considered to be essential to the war effort. The chapter then concludes with an analysis of the hero as depicted in a number of unpublished comics created by actively serving members of the US military. These texts serve as a counterpoint to the categories of heroism previously established and exemplify actual soldiers' focus on the elements of daily life and routine in either a rebellious fashion or with a focus on 'grassroots' elements of American culture that reconnect them with home, as opposed to the overt propaganda and patriotism that exists in the commercial comics that were produced for their consumption.

The Political Hero⁴⁶

Real Heroes, published between 1941 and 1942 by Parents' Magazine Press, was intended as a factual, educational rival to the fantasy comics of the era. Each issue recounted the narratives of historical and contemporary world leaders and boasted a number of eminent historians and public figures who contributed to its advisory board. Eleanor Roosevelt described it as "a comic magazine, which everyone of us with youngsters who like to read the comics, should hail with joy" (Roosevelt, 1941).

As evidenced in the previous chapter, Parents' Magazine Press worked closely with the OWI, after its formation in 1942, to propagate messages concentric with the wider needs of the war effort by incorporating them into their comics. Through the deployment of popular symbolism and recurrent narrative tropes, these non-fictional publications sought to reassure the populace about the competence of their leaders who were characterised in specific heroic terms. The covers of issues one to four of *Real Heroes* indicate a tension inherent in ideas of heroism within popular culture during the Second World War. This is revealed in the claim that the narratives within *Real Heroes* are "Not about impossible supermen, but about real-life heroes and heroines who have made and are making history!" (see figure 3.1). Thus, at the outset, *Real Heroes* presents itself as a factual counterpoint to the fantastic narratives prevalent in the majority of comics during the period. This contrast may be summarized as existing between the fantasy heroes (and 'superheroes') of popular culture and real personalities actually involved in the conflict, and stemming from an anxiety that the former might undermine support for or confidence in the

⁴⁶ It must be noted at the outset that these figures are exclusively white males. It is not the intention of this thesis to analyse their depiction in terms of race or gender studies. However, this fact does give an indication of discriminatory trends within the comics of the period. Despite the existence of the Women's Auxiliary Corps (WAC), the considerable number of black American males serving in the armed forces and the service of over 150,000 black American women in the WAC, none of these demographics are mentioned in the sample of comics selected for analysis in this thesis. This, in turn, indicates an important avenue for future research. For more information on the role of these populations during the conflict see Doble and Lang (2003) and Wynn (2010)

latter. “[T]he most inspiring thing about the men and women featured in REAL HEROES is that they are all human beings. [...] No wonder it thrills us to read about these human heroes and heroines, and to dream fine dreams of what we, too, might do some day!” (Heicht, *Real Heroes* #2).

The wartime positioning of *Real Heroes* by Parents’ Magazine as a form of ‘factual propaganda’, in line with OFF philosophy (as inherited by the OWI) and Roosevelt’s ideals is clarified in the following dedication: “This is a special issue of REAL HEROES. It is devoted mostly to our heroes in uniform, our own and our allies’, and it is dedicated to the men in all the armed services at home and abroad” (*Real Heroes* #4).

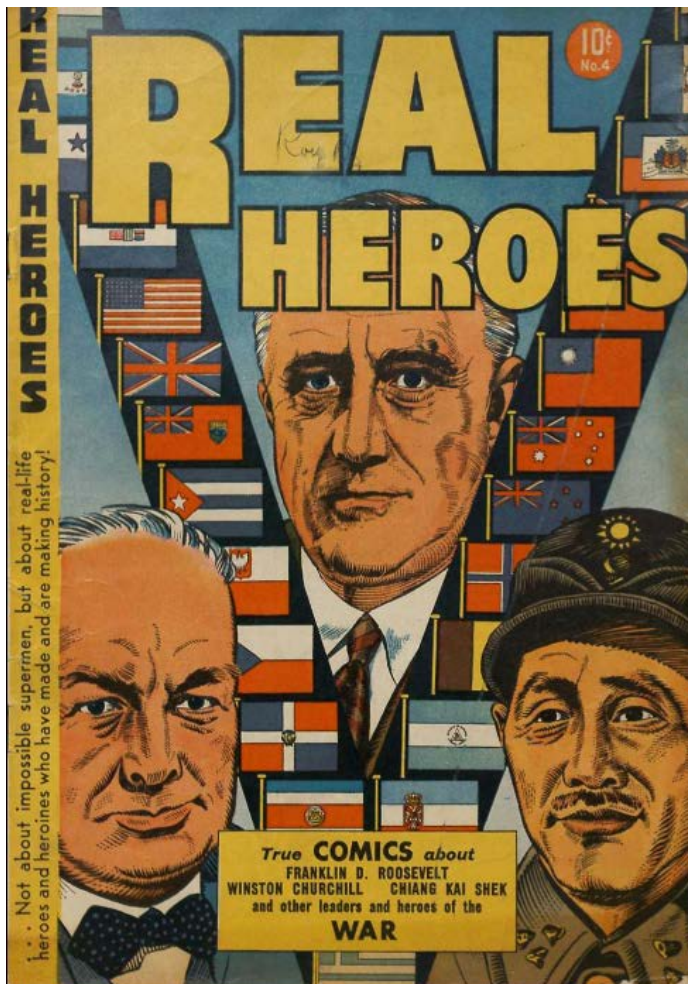


Figure 3.1 Cover of *Real Heroes* #4 (Parents’ Magazine Press, 1942).

The information contained in *Real Heroes* fits with the propaganda principle of providing behavioural role models via the hero figure. The publication does not simply present accounts of heroic figures but actively seeks to encourage heroic attributes in its readers. The president of Parents' Magazine Press, George J. Heicht, ends his introduction to the first issue with a direct address to the reader that deserves to be quoted here in full:

You may wish you could be a hero, too, and fight for freedom. If this war goes on long enough, your wish may be granted. But in the meantime, you have a duty that may take as much discipline, self-control, and bulldog stick-to-it-iveness on your part as the U.S. Marines showed on Wake Island. Your duty is to learn all you can while you can of history, science, arithmetic, languages, and all the other subjects you will need to master before you can be of much service to your country's cause as a great leader, either in war or peace (*Real Heroes #4*).

This narrative can be interpreted as an encouragement to become, not only a hero, but a "great leader" (ibid.). Heicht characterises this type of hero as one educated in "history, science, arithmetic, *languages* and [...] other subjects" (ibid. Emphasis added).⁴⁷ The emphasis on the duty of the reader to educate themselves in preparation for serving their country reveals the editorial intentions of the publication and, by placing history as the primary subject for study, privileges the content of the comic over the other subjects and reinforces the value of the comic itself in this educative role.

However, this short narrative also contains evidence for the cooperative relationship between the types of hero identified here. The symbolic hero is referred to in the notion that "a hero [fights] for freedom" (ibid.). The soldier hero is evoked in the reference to the US Marines during the first battle of Wake Island (1941), that began simultaneously with the attack on Pearl Harbor, despite the territory ultimately being lost to the Japanese

⁴⁷ This point is expanded upon further in a later section.

(Moran, 2011). As such, *Real Heroes* indicates a tension between real and fictional heroes within American war-era popular culture. The inclusive rhetoric and direct address to the reader employed by Heicht aids consumer identification with the message itself (Blommert and Bulcaen, 2000, 453). “Your country is going to need you. Be ready when the call comes (ibid.).” Similarly inclusive narrative strategies were also used in other comics’ depictions of the political hero.⁴⁸

Attributes of the Political Hero: Foreign Language Acquisition

The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd President of the United States (1943) was published by the OWI in order to characterize the President as a heroic leader capable of ushering America to victory during the Second World War. Critics, however, viewed this publication as blatant propaganda in favour of the President and argued that its publication contributed to Roosevelt’s re-election for a fourth term of office in 1944 (Winkler, 1978, 79). In the opening panel, the comic presents a dramatic image of Roosevelt gazing heavenward, situated between Uncle Sam⁴⁹ and the Capitol Building (see figure 3.2).⁵⁰ The illustration of Uncle Sam is essentially similar to the iconic image created for US Army recruitment posters by James Montgomery Flagg in 1917. According to Christopher Capozzola (2010) this icon of the nation “helped Americans make sense of the wartime state by putting a personal face on political power” (Capozzola, 2010, 3). Similarly, the Capitol Building itself is an icon of both American political democracy and representative of

⁴⁸ For a more detailed account of this see the next section of this chapter.

⁴⁹ The term ‘Uncle Sam’ first came into common usage during the war with Great Britain (1812) and is generally regarded as a development upon the earlier character of ‘Brother Jonathan’, the personification of the state of New England deriving from the seventeenth century.

⁵⁰ Located in Washington D.C. and opened in 1800, this neoclassical building is considered to be the seat of the legislative assembly of the United States.

America as a whole. “The Capitol is History; it is the Major Symbol of the Nation” (Aikman, 1970, 7). It “stands as a symbol in stone of the success of our Republic” (ibid., 5).

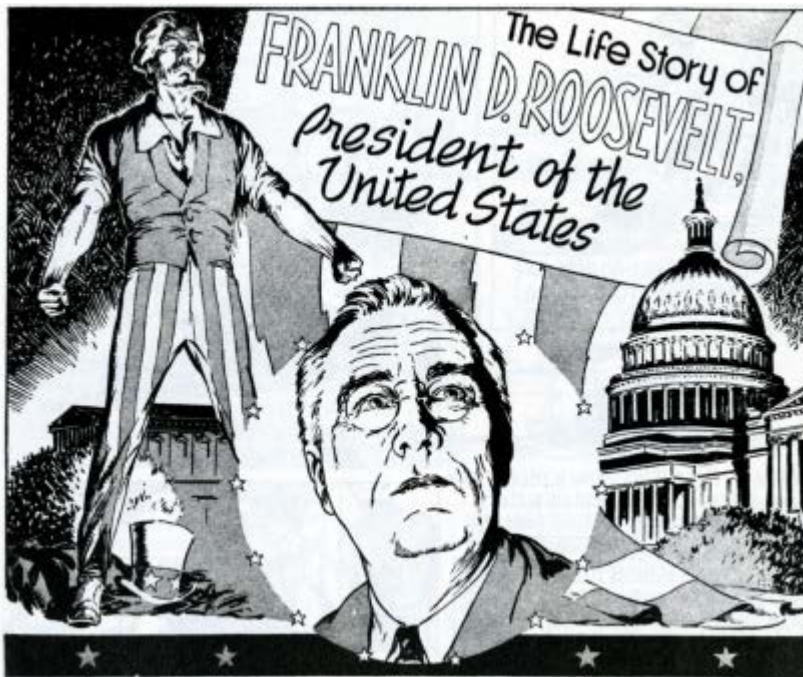


Figure 3.2. The opening panel of *The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd President of the United States* (1943).

The imagery of this opening panel thus signifies mythic aspects of American ideology, the iconography of freedom and America’s categorisation of the Second World War as the struggle to defend democracy against fascism. Uncle Sam, sleeves rolled up, hat by his feet, stance wide and with his fists clenched as though about to enter a bare-knuckle fight is an important national icon of American determination. Uncle Sam evidently personifies America’s fighting strength and is Roosevelt’s ‘right-hand man’. The inclusion of the Capitol Building over Roosevelt’s left shoulder encapsulates the American ideal of democracy and is a representation of American ideology. Situating the image of Roosevelt between these two images immediately places the President as the pivot in a balance of strength and ideology. As such, this opening panel signifies the necessary cooperation

between the three categories of hero essential within total war and propagated by comics as popular culture (developed further later in this chapter).

The narrative of the comic continues to depict Roosevelt as the embodiment of American values during his childhood as well as his early career. This is also the case for the other members of the Roosevelt family. In reference to the American Dream myth of the self-made man, the reader is told in the third panel that Roosevelt's father, James, was a "successful though not wealthy farmer" (*The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 1943). The truth of this statement is tentative at best. In fact, James Roosevelt's connection with farming was as a trustee of the Farmer's Loan and Trust Company (Churchill, 1966, 145). As well as this, President Roosevelt's father was a director of the Consolidated Coal Company of Maryland, president of the Louisville, New Albany and Chicago Railroad, president of the Champlain Transportation Company, and owned large interests in Wisconsin (ibid.). He was, therefore, considerably wealthy. This fact demonstrates that the OWI was prepared to publish lies in pursuit of its aims in creating this pro-Roosevelt comics despite its official 'strategy of truth'.

The statement that James Roosevelt was a successful though not wealthy farmer was arguably included within this publication to evoke recollections of President Roosevelt's New Deal policies connected to agriculture, including the Farm Security Act (1933) and the Agricultural Adjustments Act (1933). The assertion also contrasts with the grand illustration of the Roosevelt family home in the previous panel. This house is, in fact, an estate overlooking the Hudson River in New York. In fact, the Roosevelt family were "a direct line of Hudson River inheritance from the men who carved out domains with the blessing of the old Dutch West India Company" (Churchill, 1966, 173). This estate is illustrated at a distance, the stately home itself taking up only a small space in the centre of the panel. This visual technique of using perspective to reinforce the rhetoric is intended minimize any sense of alienation that the general readership might feel towards

Roosevelt's privileged childhood and allow for the President to be depicted as a populist embodiment of American identity and values. This strengthens the cohesion between the consumer and the ideological message of the comic regardless of the social status of the reader (van Dijk, 2000, 453). It also demonstrates the ability of comics to visually and rhetorically code contradictory information in a way that appears to resolve any inherent tension without actually doing so in reality.

The implication that Roosevelt is an ideal international diplomat is introduced when the audience are told that, during several childhood trips to Europe that would prove "invaluable in later years," "Franklin" learned "the languages and customs of many countries" (ibid.). The important point here is the establishment of Roosevelt as a learned linguist. This is a recurrent trope within the narratives of the political hero that also, at least in this case, connects leadership with international diplomacy. *Real Heroes # 3* deploys this trope in the narrative of John Paul Jones, founder of the American navy. Jones is depicted early in his career as learning both French and Spanish much to the bemusement of his shipmates (*Real Heroes # 3*, 1942). In this case the benefit of foreign language acquisition for Jones is not one of international diplomacy but is directly connected to his prowess in the American Revolutionary War (1775 – 1783). France entered into the conflict against the British in 1778 and Spain entered in 1779 as an ally of the French. This pattern of foreign language acquisition as a military boon for the political hero also recurs in the same issue of *Real Heroes* in the chronicle of Field Marshall Wavell, a senior commander of the British Army, who learned Russian to aid his understanding of that nation's tactics in the build up to the First World War (ibid.). This trope occurs again in the narrative of Chinese political and soldier hero Chiang Kai-Shek who studied Japanese when he was sent to Japan for advanced military training (*Real Heroes # 4*, 1942). It is also worthy of reiteration here that Heicht, in *Real Heroes # 4*, specifically identifies languages amongst the skills needed to become a hero in service to

the national interest (ibid.).⁵¹ Thus, an association between diplomatic and military skills and foreign language acquisition was considered to be a quality of heroic leadership.

Attributes of the Political Hero: Sport and Horsemanship

The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt illustrates the President's dedication to military-orientated outdoor activities such as riding horses, "knowledge of fire-arms", proficiency with a rifle, and a "life-long interest in boats and navigation" (*The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 1943). Jarvis highlights that a number of political cartoons of the period strove to embody Roosevelt, who was "certainly no tremendously muscled superhero," with qualities of strength and athleticism (Jarvis, 2004, 32). In this regard, *The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt* was no exception. There are two important points connected to the political hero that derive from this characterisation of President Roosevelt by the OWI. The first is that participation in team sports indicates that, although Roosevelt is shown to be a heroic individual, he has overcome the heroic individualism that was the hallmark of the American frontier hero mythology (see also, Blum, 1976, 53-63). This heroic group participation developed, in part, from the necessities of the total war environment of both the First and Second World Wars. Whether a worker or a soldier, success in total war could only be achieved in cooperation with others. The second aspect of Roosevelt's characterisation by the OWI is the inclusion of the skill of horsemanship. This is a recurrent idea within the narratives of many American heroes. For example, Franklin Roosevelt's relative, Theodore Roosevelt, was considered both an American hero and a skilled horseman who had served in the US Cavalry division known as 'the Rough Riders' and later penned a novel with the same title (Churchill, 1966, 181). The attributes of sportsmanship and

⁵¹ For more information see the previous section of this chapter.

horsemanship are also included in *Real Heroes* accounts of leader-heroes from nations allied to America. For example, in the narrative of Field Marshall Wavell (*Real Heroes* # 3, 1942), Wavell's qualities as a heroic leader are similarly emphasised by recounting his childhood achievements in sport. Wavell is depicted as a team player due to his prowess at football and is also characterised as a proficient horseman.⁵² This trope is highlighted in further connection with the attribute of sportsmanship by John Blum in his description of the popular mythology surrounding Major General George S. Patton who "majored in polo, football and horsemanship [...] dismounting long enough to set an intercollegiate 220-yard-dash record" (Blum, 1976, 57).

American comics also exhibited a tendency to construe foreign powers and personalities in Americanised terms and the inclusion of the skill of horsemanship in the narratives of Wavell and other foreign political heroes is an example of this. In the narrative of Winston Churchill (*Real Heroes* # 4), the prestige of Churchill's military education at Sandhurst is clarified for an American audience as, "The English West Point" (*Real Heroes* # 4, 1942). Further, in the next panel we are told that "he became a celebrated horseman" and Churchill is shown riding in the subsequent two panels (ibid. See figure 3.3). It is also useful to note here that Churchill is illustrated riding a white horse. This visual signifier of the hero is another recurrent trope connected with the ideal of horsemanship. Citing Barthes, Murray clarifies the visual symbolism at work here, noting that "firmly held notions that the colour white signifies purity [...] can be employed by those who advertise" (Murray, 2011, 86). In this instance, the advertisement is pro-Churchill propaganda casting him as a hero. Combined with this visual communication of Churchill as a hero riding a white horse, the connection between horsemanship and military leadership is signified in the narrative both visually and rhetorically. In fact, horsemanship

⁵² The associations between sport and warfare have often been conflated and can be traced through European history back to Ancient Greece. See, for example, Henry Newbolt, 'Vitaï Lampada', Mangan (2003) and Prichard (2013).

is the most frequently recurrent trope in the narratives of 'real heroes' under analysis in this study. It also occurs in the narrative account of Chiang Kai-Shek (*Real Heroes # 4*) in which he is illustrated twice on horseback leading his troops into battle (see figure 3.4).



Figure 3.3. Page from *Real Heroes #4* that uses visual iconography, symbolism and rhetoric to imply that Churchill is a celebrated horseman (Parents' Magazine Press, 1942).



Figure 3.4. One of two panels in the narrative of Chang Kai-Shek in which he is illustrated on horseback, leading his troops into battle (*Real Heroes #4*, Parents' Magazine Press, 1942).

The propaganda message communicated by these comics is that leadership (at least within the United States and its allies) equates with heroism and that sportsmanship and horsemanship are qualities of the category of political hero. The idea that horsemanship is a necessary skill of leadership has been advanced throughout history.⁵³ The association of horsemanship with heroism and leadership may also derive, at least in part, from a similar pattern within American frontier mythology. "The horse was the key to the military conquest of the Americas and to their agricultural colonization (Hall, 2005, 24).⁵⁴ Many nomadic Native American Indian tribes were dependent upon the horse and possessed "a remarkable skill on horseback" that made them "formidable foes" (Billington and Ridge, 2001, 49). Horsemanship, therefore, has been effectively mythologised as a

⁵³ "Beginning with the simple art of mounting on horseback, let him so train himself in all particulars of horsemanship that, to look at him, the men must see their leader is a horseman who can leap a trench unscathed or scale a parapet, or gallop down a bank, and hurl a javelin with the best. These are accomplishments which one and all will pave the way to make contempt impossible" (Xenophon, 2010, 47). Written circa 350 BC, this work is considered the earliest literary work on horsemanship.

⁵⁴ For further information see Diamond (1997) and Smil (2000).

fundamental part of the development of the American nation itself and, as such, appears as a factor characterizing that nation's leaders and contextualizing the leaders of allied nations during total war.

Attributes of the Political Hero: Foresight

The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicates two full pages to illustrating Roosevelt's ability to overcome the effects of polio and explaining the heroic circumstances that caused his ill health. His illness is described in the comic as "infantile paralysis" (*The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 1943, 11). While this term was used generally to describe the symptoms of poliomyelitis, as well as the virus itself, it is used in this comic with connotations of a youthful hardship that the President has overcome. Roosevelt, however, contracted the disease in 1921 at the age of thirty-nine. "Franklin Delano Roosevelt had once the lean, lithe, athletic body and handsomeness of a Hollywood leading man. But all that remained after the ravages of polio in 1921 (then called infantile paralysis) and subsequent confinement to a wheelchair for twenty years was a leonine head and broad torso attached in incongruous fashion to a pair of wasted, completely useless legs" (Kimball, 1998, 3). Far from having survived the disease unscathed, as the narrative of this comic implies, Roosevelt was left with permanent paralysis in the lower half of his body.

Once again taking a certain amount of liberty with the truth, *The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt* communicates the President's "dramatic recovery" using fighting rhetoric that implies that the President has already fought and won his own personal war with illness. The final panel of page eleven depicts a chair bound Roosevelt resolutely stating that "I'll lick this thing" and the subsequent two panels on the following page reinforce this sense of the President's combative spirit through repetition of the words "fight", "fighting", and

“battle” (*The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 1943, 12). Roosevelt’s recovery is constructed in pseudo-miraculous terms that “amazed physicians” after his discovery that “the natural pools at Warm Springs, in Georgia, were beneficial” (ibid.). The President’s benevolence is exhibited through his endowment of the site “as a sanatorium [*sic*] for the cure of other sufferers” (ibid.). This latter example can be decoded to imply that leaders engage others in shared meaning derived from the lessons they have learned in overcoming adversity (Bennis and Thomas, 1998, 61). This is a primary factor contributing to their status as political hero and an important attribute demarcating the political hero from the individualistic hero of American mythology prior to total war.

A further vital attribute of the political hero is that of foresight. This ability aids the political hero in overcoming adversity and conflict. In *Real Heroes #4*, Winston Churchill is credited with foreseeing German militarism prior to the First World War, readying the British naval fleet for battle, and ordering the use of the first tanks “which helped turn the tide in favor of the Allies” (*Real Heroes # 4*, 1942). However, as with the occasional fabrications inherent in the OWI’s publication, Parents’ Magazine Press were prepared to print false information if it served the propagation of their intended message. Churchill’s attitude during the build-up to the First World War was more ambiguous than indicated by *Real Heroes #4* and centred on the defence of British interests. In his correspondence with Arthur Ponsonby on 31 July, 1914, he wrote: “So long as no treaty obligation or true British interest is involved I am of your opinion that we shd [*sic*] remain neutral. [...] The extension of the conflict by a German attack upon France or Belgium wd [*sic*] raise other issues than those which now exist, and it wd [*sic*] be wrong at this moment to pronounce finally one way or the other as to our duty or our interests” (Churchill, 1991, 715-6). It is interesting to note that Churchill himself did not mind discrepancies between politically-motivated cartoons, caricatures and actual reality. In fact, he once wrote a vindication of a number of

representations of both himself and his father by eminent British cartoonists (Churchill, 1948, 9-21. See figures 3.5 and 3.6. For more see Urquhart, 1955).

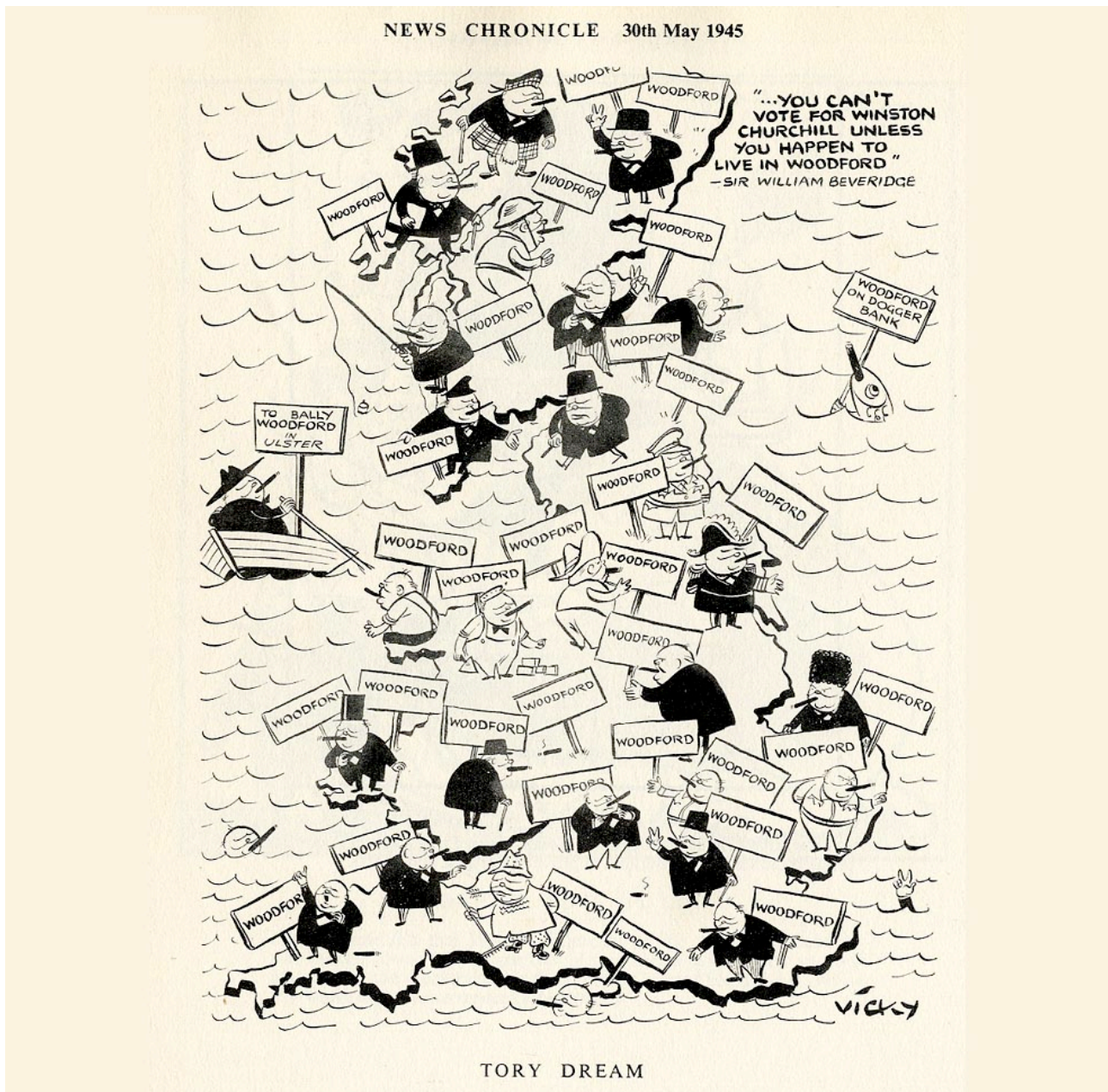


Figure 3.5. 'Tory Dream'. Satirical cartoon of Winston Churchill by Vicky (Victor Weisz) (*News Chronicle*, 1945).



TWO CHURCHILLS

Figure 3.6. 'Two Churchills'. Satirical cartoon of Winston Churchill by David Low (*Evening Standard*, 1945).

In *Real Heroes #4*, Churchill is credited with foreseeing German militarism for a second time and warning "England again and again against Hitler" (*Real Heroes #4*, 1942). In this instance, Parents' Magazine Press come closer to the truth as the British leader "had called stridently for Britain to rearm as Germany became more belligerent in the 1930s" (Kimball, 1998, 2). By highlighting the attribute of foresight, these comics encouraged their readership to revere and trust in the competence of their leaders to overcome the adversity presented by war and the opposing ideology of fascism. As such,

they directly serve the propagandistic purpose of diminishing anxiety on the home front (Doob, 1950, 439). In contrast, the next section addresses the attribute of recklessness. This quality, however, was deployed by Parents' Magazine only in the characterisation of the foreign political heroes of allied nations. This implies that the message that Parent's Magazine sought to propagate was that America's allies were prepared to act rashly in pursuit of victory while the nation's own war effort was in the steady hands of domestic political heroes.

Attributes of the (Foreign) Political Hero: Recklessness

This section presents evidence from two issues of *Real Heroes* (#3 and #4) that the recurrent theme of risk taking, here referred to as recklessness, was used by Parents' Magazine Press to characterize the political heroes of America's allies. Two of the examples presented here concern political heroes of Great Britain, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and General Archibald Wavell. The third foreign political hero whose story is dramatized within the pages of *Real Heroes* is the Chinese political and military leader, Chiang Kai-Shek. Although Chiang Kai-Shek is featured, it is notable that Joseph Stalin is absent from every issue of *Real Heroes* that currently exists in the archives of the Library of Congress. Russia had been allied with Germany from 1939 and American propaganda had demarcated them as an enemy of the United States. After Germany broke the terms of the German-Soviet non-aggression pact in mid-1941, Russia became an ally of the United States, prior to the publication of *Real Heroes* #1. "This move from condemnation to valorization was difficult, and initially the propaganda effort resolved the crisis by simply ignoring the Soviet contribution to the war" (Murray, 2011, 230).

Real Heroes # 3 presents British General Archibald Wavell as a brave and loyal young man who served in the trenches of the First World War. Nevertheless, he also possessed a certain degree of recklessness and the narrative draws attention to this fondness for risk taking. As a young man, Wavell is chastised and advised not to take risks in the face of danger. This motif is repeated when, during his service on the Western Front during the First World War, he is further chastised by a colleague for taking risks with his own personal safety (see figure 3.7). This fondness for risk-taking aligns the British political hero with notions of bravery and loyalty due to the selfless nature of his actions and the willingness to risk one's life for others (Nietzsche, 2010, 228; Synnott, 2009, 22). Heroes who exemplify such traits are actively "giving up their body for the team" (Messner et al, 2000, 387). Though a certain degree of recklessness is involved in all fictional narratives in which the hero confronts personal risk in engaging the enemy or overcoming adversity, it is indicative of the importance of this trope within American public consciousness that it should occur as part of the narrative of foreign political heroes.



Figure 3.7. Panel from *Real Heroes #3* (Parents' Magazine Press, 1942).

Real Heroes #4 characterizes Winston Churchill in the same terms as General Wavell. In reference to his service as a war journalist during the Cuban War of Independence (1895) the account of Churchill first coming under enemy fire on the day of his twenty-first birthday demonstrates his recklessness alongside his courage as “he marched immediately beside the General who led the infantry attack” (*Real Heroes #4*, 1942). Later, during his service in the Second Boer War (1899 - 1902) Churchill is told: “You take a grave risk, young man. You might never return” (ibid., 4). Churchill’s bravery, self-sacrifice and loyalty to his colleagues are further illustrated in the narrative as he reportedly clears a train wreck under enemy fire, is captured, and subsequently escapes: “Churchill was everywhere [...] When the train got back to town, soldiers reported ... “If it had not been for Churchill --- / - Not one of us would have escaped”” (ibid.).

As with the previous narrative of General Wavell, this account of Churchill’s reckless bravery and loyal self-sacrifice reveals the importance of the characteristic of recklessness in foreign political heroes for American consumption. In the narrative of Chiang Kai-Shek (*Real Heroes # 4*), the Chinese leader’s heroic recklessness is exemplified in an incident in which he led a “dare-to-die” mission against the Royal Forces of the Imperial Japanese Army with only one hundred troops “armed with bombs” (ibid., 42. See figure 3.8). As Kai-Shek is both a political hero and a soldier hero, the cooperation between all three types of hero is, in this instance, illustrated by his close relationship with Doctor Sun Yat-Sen, a Chinese symbolic hero who is widely considered to be the progenitor of modern China and the ‘Father of the Nation’ (Gordon, 2010, 114).



Figure 3.?. Panel showing the recklessness of Chinese leader Chang Kai-Shek (*Real Heroes #4*, Parents' Magazine Press, 1942)

These comics demonstrate how the American nation regarded leadership, language acquisition, sporting prowess, horsemanship and foresight as essential elements of heroism and attributes of heroic leadership. Further, they diminished anxiety on the home front by reassuring the American nation about the competence of their own political heroes and the reckless competence of their allied political heroes. Though this study has focused upon the narratives of the political heroes of America's main allies within the pages of *Real Heroes* (with the notable exception of Joseph Stalin that does not occur), it is interesting to note that the characteristic of recklessness also occurs in the narratives of Yugoslavia's General Draja Mihailovich (*Real Heroes # 6*, 1942) and Greek Resistance leader Major General Manoli Mandakas (*Real Heroes # 11*, 1943).

The Symbolic Hero

This section details the category of heroism identified as the symbolic hero. It does so by analysing the comics of Will Eisner, specifically the Quality Comics⁵⁵ publication *Uncle Sam Quarterly* # 1 – 5 (1941 – 1942). There is no evidence that the publishers of Quality Comics engaged in direct cooperation with US government offices to the same extent as other publishing companies, such as Parents' Magazine Press, other than the circumstantial evidence that they received the *Magazine War Guide* circulated by the OWI after its formation in June 1942. However, Eisner himself had close contact and cooperation with the government and military institutions of the United States subsequent to his vitalizing the iconic ideological American hero after the outbreak of the war. He also, like many comics creators, placed anti-fascist and pro-democratic messages into his pre-war publications that demarcated Nazi Germany in particular as the ideological enemy of the US. "With patriotism running at an all-time high due to World War II, it made sense for Eisner to bring the spirit of America to life. In 1941, Uncle Sam headlined in his own quarterly title" (Greenberger, 2005, 43). After he was drafted in 1942 and transferred to the Pentagon, Eisner's role was producing "comics and articles designed to educate soldiers in arms and vehicle maintenance" (ibid., xvi). Eisner received the rank of corporal. His main publication for the army during the war was entitled *Army Motors*. Eisner spent four years working with the Pentagon, a time that he described as opening his eyes "to a whole new potential for comics" (Eisner in Inge, 2011, 82).

Eisner did not develop the iconic character of Uncle Sam himself but, rather, appropriated a figure that had developed in tandem with American identity since before the

⁵⁵ The publishing accreditation for *Uncle Sam Quarterly* and many other titles created by Eisner were published by a company called Comic Magazines, Inc., edited by Eisner and having E.M. Arnold as the general manager. They all, however, bore a small legend beside their cover titles indicating that they were part of the "Quality Comic Group". This has led to these publications being collectively referred to as 'Quality Comics' despite the fact that this was never a registered name under which the group traded.

American War of Independence (1775 – 1783). The character of Uncle Sam developed from the earlier figures of Yankee Doodle and Brother Jonathan (Morgan, 1988). Though there is some debate concerning the pre-war origins of the song ‘Yankee Doodle’ from which the initial iconic personification of America derives (Lemay, 1976). Both the song and the figure were adopted by the American nation and, in particular, by soldiers and political cartoonists during the conflict itself. Though the figure of Yankee Doodle was to remain throughout American history in one form or another, the character was eventually assimilated into a subsequent entity deriving from New England, Brother Jonathan, who held sway as the representative of American notions of identity between the War of Independence and the American Civil War. As Winifred Morgan writes: “Brother Jonathan was a projection of what many wanted to think was American” (Morgan, 1988, 21). After the Civil War, the character was to undergo a further metamorphosis, eventually resulting in the personification of American national identity known today as Uncle Sam (ibid.). This character is based on the real Uncle Sam Wilson who supplied meat to the US Army during the war of 1812 (1812 – 1815).⁵⁶

Arguably the most widely known image of Uncle Sam is that of the First World War recruitment poster by the popular magazine illustrator, James Montgomery Flagg (Kingsbury, 2010, 8. See figure 3.9). While based upon a British recruitment poster involving Lord Kitchener, this iconic poster is often considered to be the ‘call’ of the American nation and involves a direct address to the viewer in both its visual and rhetorical discourse. Curiously, Uncle Sam’s top-hatted, star-spangled regalia derives from an earlier depiction of the figure of Yankee Doodle published in the British magazine *Punch* (Rainey, 2003, 197). The poster is also a self-portrait of Flagg (ibid.). In other depictions of this character (and the earlier figure of Brother Jonathan), red and white striped trousers are added to Uncle Sam’s costume in order to further signify the flag of the United States. In

⁵⁶ In 1961 Congress passed a resolution officially recognising Wilson as the namesake of this American icon.

turn, Eisner further developed the ideological iconography that pervades this character by incorporating elements of the wider visual rhetoric of the Second World War as well as giving the character a lankiness reminiscent of Abraham Lincoln (see figure 3.10).



Figure 3.9. US Army Recruiting Poster, James Montgomery Flagg, 1917



Figure 3.10. Cover of *Uncle Sam Quarterly* #5 (Quality Comics, 1942).

For example, *Uncle Sam Quarterly* #4 (Autumn, 1942) opens with a splash page that shows a gigantic Uncle Sam accompanied by Buddy, giving the 'V for Victory' sign and framed by American fighter planes in a 'V' formation while American tanks and troops charge headlong into battle (see figure 3.11). This is the first time in which the title of the lead story has highlighted the "U" and "S" of "Uncle Sam" by colouring these letters in the

stars and stripes of the American flag. Previously, either both words, “Uncle” and “Sam” have been ‘star spangled’ or coloured uniformly. Highlighting these letters visually reinforces the association of American ideology with its personification in the heroic figure of Uncle Sam. In this way, Eisner further illustrates the character of Uncle Sam as the personification of American principles and visually shows this character as an idealized symbolic hero. However, not only does Eisner develop Flagg’s American icon visually, he also saturates his narrative with fascist and totalitarian ideology as a foil for the democratic heroism of the eponymous protagonist.

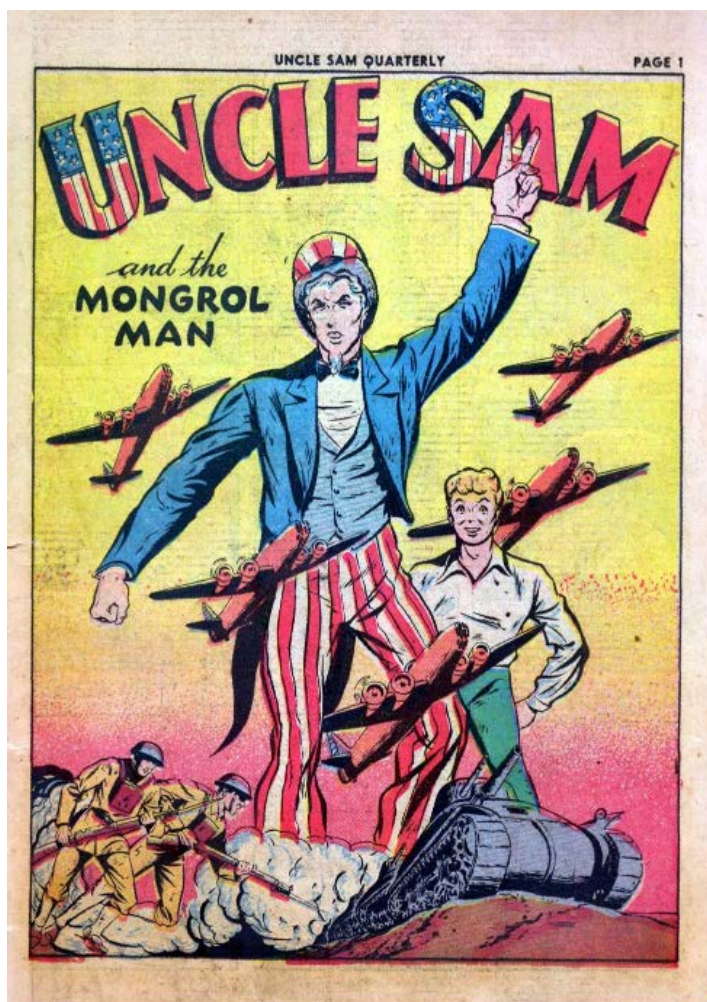


Figure 3.11. *Uncle Sam Quarterly* #4 (Quality Comics, 1942).

The lead story in *Uncle Sam Quarterly* # 1 (Autumn, 1941), 'Forged Faces', is based upon American fears of infiltration by an ideological enemy.⁵⁷ As the plot develops, the narrative also dramatizes many of the ideological principles of the United States such as democracy, freedom, and personal, social and financial development - the American Dream. In this narrative, a corrupt politician by the name of Bristol abducts "more than half the US Senate" when they are traveling by train to Washington D.C. for a vote on child conscription. Bristol replaces the senators with his henchmen thanks to the recurrent trope of a mad inventor's secret formula that allows the remodelling of people's faces⁵⁸ (*Uncle Sam Quarterly* # 1, Autumn, 1941). Prior to the henchmen boarding the train, the Senators are discussing how they will vote on Bristol's bill to conscript twelve year olds, the "Youth Training Bill." This issue plays upon the desire that many young readers felt to be actively involved in the war effort. However, the majority of the Senate are against the bill. "Conscripting!! Bah!! Enslaving is more like it!!" (ibid.). Here again we see the ideological threads of the narrative converge, reflecting the cultural climate of America at the time as it debated war, freedom, and democracy. The narrative moves to "Bristol's Everytown headquarters", revealing that the Senator's corruption has spread throughout the nation and is no longer simply located in Washington D.C. and the Capitol Building (ibid.). Suited, cigar smoking men barter for "the pick of America's youth" and Buddy, Uncle Sam's sidekick, is sold "To the steel mills," further evoking the ideological tensions between slavery and freedom in the United States (ibid.).⁵⁹ The final panels of this page show that Bristol is set upon eradicating all America's ideological principles: "Freedom... of speech must be limited!! And offenders placed in concentration camps!!" (ibid.). This can be read

⁵⁷ For a further discussion of this trope as a category of the enemy within comics see the following chapter.

⁵⁸ Though the particular effects of the formula change, the secret formula of a mad or rogue scientist as a plot catalyst occurs in so many comics of the Golden and later Ages that to recount them all would be absurd. Perhaps the most widely known example is that of the transformation of Steve Rogers into Captain America (Simon and Kirby, Marvel Comics, March 1941).

⁵⁹ For a further discussion of the war profiteer as a category of the enemy see the following chapter.

as propaganda aligning the corrupt villain and fascist ideology. Bristol's language here is notably evocative of events in Nazi occupied Europe and reveals that Eisner was conscious of the existence of concentration camps, although to what extent it is, of course, uncertain.

As the personification of American ideology, Uncle Sam always acts in accordance with it. When the Steel Helmets, Bristol's henchmen and direct reference to *Wermacht* 'Stahlhelm' ('steel helm'), arrive in Everytown to conscript Buddy, America's symbolic hero encourages the youth to cede to and trust authority saying, "I don't know, Buddy... It seems to me a year of camp would be good for the kids!" (ibid.) Later, Bristol chastises Uncle Sam for assaulting the Steel Helmets and thereby breaking the law. At this point the symbolic hero desists, instead instigating his democratic right to challenge authority peacefully.

On several occasions throughout this issue Uncle Sam swears action by an icon of the American nation, such as "the Stars and Stripes," or by a historical event mythologized by the nation, such as "Shades of Bunker Hill!" The Battle of Bunker Hill (1775) formed part of the American War of Independence (1775 – 1783). It was officially considered a victory for the British. However, due to the large comparative losses suffered by British troops it was considered by the Colonies' Militia as an indication that the inexperienced American troops could successfully engage against Britain's trained military. Rhetoric such as this further aligns the symbolic hero with the patriotic symbols and mythology of their nation that hold a psychological significance for their reader (Campbell, 2008, 219). A further instance of this occurs in *Uncle Sam Quarterly* #2 (1942). Before setting out to engage the German enemy, Uncle Sam swears action "By the stars and stripes" (*Uncle Sam Quarterly* #2, 1942). In the following panel, the Nazi commander is depicted swearing "By the fiery beard of Wotan" (ibid.). This juxtaposition of a patriotic oath sworn upon the flag of the United States and the ideological enemy 'other', swearing upon a major deity

from Germanic and Anglo-Saxon paganism, is a strikingly instance of rhetorical propaganda within the narrative. Wotan is a form of Wōden from Germanic and Anglo-Saxon Paganism deriving from the Norse god Odin.

Uncle Sam's loyalty does not end with his patriotic dedication to the ideology of America. He is also loyal to the American people and, particularly, to his colleague and side-kick, Buddy. On numerous occasions throughout this and other issues of *Uncle Sam Quarterly*, the symbolic hero overcomes apparently insurmountable odds and situations in order to rescue Buddy or an American civilian. Examples from the various stories in *Uncle Sam Quarterly #1* include being smothered in molten steel, shrugging off "electricity enough to kill an army", and climbing unaided up the side of a burning building (ibid.). In accordance with the principles of democracy, however, the strength of America's symbolic hero depends upon the support of the American people. This is made explicit in the final story of *Uncle Sam Quarterly #1*, 'The Steel Helmets', in which a fictitious newspaper report tarnishes the hero's reputation to the extent to which he loses his power. "Uncle Sam's strength depends on the people's faith, without which Uncle Sam is powerless" (ibid.). After fighting through the allegorical "swamps of ignorance and jungles of lies," "The strength and spirit of America" (Uncle Sam) returns to fight and defeat the Steel Helmets and the dictator who controls them (Bristol) "with the people's help" (ibid.).

The cooperation between Uncle Sam as the symbolic hero of democracy and the American populace is also connected to the industrial war effort on the home front. In the first story in *Uncle Sam Quarterly # 3* (1942), 'The Ant Men', Uncle Sam and Buddy are on their way to help at a local tank factory. Despite the "No Admittance" sign at the factory entrance they arrive in time to be informed by the guard that the "500th tank" is about to "roll off the line" (*Uncle Sam Quarterly # 3*, 1942).

In the final panel of the page, Uncle Sam is looking at the corpse of an American soldier exclaiming, "Thunderation! It's Horrible" as he shields Buddy from the sight (ibid.).

The reader, however is allowed a full view of the brutality of the killing, an instance of comics' ability to focus attention upon the moment of death, even in fictional narratives (Taylor, 1998, 79; Murray, 2011, 222. See figure 3.12). This panel also reveals how horror imagery was incorporated into comics, despite the fact that Hollywood had been banned from making horror films, such as those popular in the 1930s, during the war period (see Murray, 2011). However, violent horror imagery not only occurred in fictional narratives of symbolic heroes but proliferated in narratives of the soldier hero intended for a predominantly adult readership.



Figure 3.12 *Uncle Sam Quarterly* #3 (Quality Comics, 1942).

The Soldier Hero

This section analyses the category of the soldier hero presented in comics published both for home front consumption by Street and Smith Publications in cooperation with the OWI and WWB⁶⁰ and by the various publishing companies edited by Vincent Sullivan, who created content specifically intended to be consumed by US servicemen both at home and abroad. Frequently, individual protagonists are identified as heroes within accounts of specific battles. Despite this focus on heroic individuals, the Marines, Air Force and Navy personnel are always generalised as soldier heroes without exception and as an implied, coherent whole. The perennially reinforced point of these narratives is that every member of the US Armed Forces and every American doing their part for the war effort are heroes (see figure 3.13). This is especially important when considering total war categories of heroism because, by 1943, members of the US Armed Forces had become the largest consumer of comics on both fronts (Hirsch, 2014).

The United States Marines #1 - 4 (1943 – 1944) were published by Magazine Enterprises (#1 - 3) and its subsidiary, Life's Romances Publishing Company (#4), both of which were edited by Sullivan. On the cover of each of these titles was the claim to tell "Authentic U.S. Marine Corps Picture Stories" and each were credited with being published "in cooperation with the United States Marine Corps." Issue one of *The United States Marines* dedicates itself to the one hundred and sixty-eighth anniversary of the Marine Corps. The importance of Marine Corps anniversaries is echoed in the propaganda file *Guadacanal Diary* (1943) during which the Marine officers select the one hundred and sixty-seventy anniversary as the date to begin their "all-out attack" on the Japanese. The opening issue of the comic also expresses appreciation for "kind assistance in making this

⁶⁰ For more information on the relationship between Street and Smith Publications and these government organisations see chapter one.

publication possible” to Brigadier General Robert L. Denig⁶¹, Captain Norman White and Lieutenant Burns Lee. Denig was the Director of the Division of Public Relations for the Marine Corps and was an influential figure in publicizing the war by specifically targeting professional newspapermen for recruitment in the armed forces.

Nowhere was Corps pride more dramatically displayed than by Brigadier General Robert L. Denig, the reactivated retiree who directed the Division of Public Relations. A sign on his wall declared: “If the public becomes apathetic about the Marine Corps, the Marine Corps will cease to exist.” By 1943 Denig’s personal inspiration – to train newspapermen as combat Marines and deploy them with FMF⁶² combat units to report the Pacific battles – had matured and flourished (Millett, 390-391).

Sullivan’s titles claim to provide accurate accounts of real events, battles and soldier heroes. As these comics were produced specifically with US servicemen as their intended audience, they are a valuable source for critical analysis. While Magazine Enterprises and its subsidiary companies published a plethora of comics in a wide range of genres, *The United States Marines* and *The American Air Forces*⁶³ (1944 – 1945) constituted their only two war-related titles. Both titles outlasted the war itself and were published well into the 1950s, whereupon their focus shifted from recounting stories of the soldier heroes and exploits of the Second World War to that of the Korean conflict.

Unusually, both publications appear to contain little fiction but instead report the events of the war through the combined narrative devices of comic art illustration and photographic narrative sequences constructed from official US Marine Corps, Army Air Force and Navy photographs. The structure and format of these publications are informative and they recount historical events without resorting to the imaginative

⁶¹ The Marine Corps Combat Correspondent Association’s Brigadier General Robert L. Denig Senior Memorial Distinguished Service Award is named after this officer and is awarded annually to a person or persons who, in the judgement of the United States Marine Corps Combat Correspondent Association board of directors has made an especially significant contribution to the perpetuation of the ideals, traditions, stature, and achievements of the United States Marine Corps (Webster, 1999, 21132).

⁶² Fleet Marine Force

⁶³ A further discussion of this title appears later in this chapter.

reconstructions or characterisations found in the majority of war-themed comics titles. However, a closer examination of these texts reveals that the visual and rhetorical elements of their narratives are highly derivative of other propaganda media popular at the time. Figure 3.13, for example, depicts action that is close (if not identical) to events that take place in the propaganda film *Guadacanal Diary* (1943). In particular the attack on the caves by Corporal Fordyce and the hand-to-hand combat of Corporal Grady parallel scenes from the film, as well as propaganda strategies such as the American individual overwhelming numerically superior Japanese forces.



Figure 3.13. "Every Marine On Gavutu And Tanambogo Was A Hero". *The United States Marines* #1 (Magazine Enterprises, 1943).

While stating that "Every Marine on Gavutu and Tanambogo was a hero", this example identifies three Marines as specific soldier heroes. Each of these men are listed

in the records of the US Marines⁶⁴ and were posthumously awarded the Navy Cross “for extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty”. The exploits of both Corporal Fordyce and Corporal Grady are also recorded by Stanley Jersey (2008) who writes:

Another standout was Cpl. Ralph W. Fordyce of Company A, one of the first to beach and one of the first in action. While inland, Fordyce overpowered an enemy navy man and, taking his gun, shot and killed his opponent and another enemy soldier. Then he daringly attacked a machine-gun emplacement, killing all five defenders. [...] Company A of the 1st Parachute Battalion had a number of exceptional men, among them PFC⁶⁵ George F. Grady. Grady was having difficulty with his Reising gun but, nevertheless, he rushed three of the enemy who were firing on his squad and engaged them in hand-to-hand combat. He killed two before he was mortally wounded; he died five hours after landing (Jersey, 2008, 154 – 155).

The discrepancy between these accounts can be accounted for by the propagandistic nature of *The United States Marines* coupled with the exaggeration and liberties taken with the truth encountered in numerous comics, including those published in cooperation with the US government. However, as each of these individuals were specifically identified as soldier heroes whose narratives and exploits were deemed worth of publication both by Magazine Enterprises and by the US Marine Corps Division of Public Relations, coupled with the fact that each of these Marines posthumously received the Navy Cross, the language of this citation provides an indicator as to the primary attributes of the category of the soldier hero.

⁶⁴ Available online. See, for example,

<https://marines.togetherweserved.com/usmc/servlet/tws.webapp.WebApp?cmd=ShadowBoxProfile&type=Person&ID=167149>

It should be noted that Corporal Ralph W. Fordyce was awarded his posthumous citation after his death in 1975. The other two Marines were killed in action.

⁶⁵ Private First Class. It should be noted that while Jersey (2008) records Grady's final rank as PFC, both *The United States Marines* and the Marine Corps website cited above (footnote 18) record his final rank as Corporal. Jersey later refers to Grady as having the rank of Corporal, indicating that his name and rank were amongst those inscribed on the American flag raised at Gavutu after the battle (Jersey, 2008, 437). This individual was evidently well known during the period as the USS Grady (DE-445) was named in honour of the fallen Marine

(<https://marines.togetherweserved.com/usmc/servlet/tws.webapp.WebApp?cmd=ShadowBoxProfile&type=Person&ID=167149>).

Fordyce is described as “Another standout”, an individual aligned with the traditions of heroic individualism. Similarly, Grady is identified as one of a number of “exceptional men”. Fordyce’s “daring” indicates both his individual bravery and a certain degree of recklessness, while Grady is credited with overcoming the adversity of the malfunction of his weapon by engaging the enemy hand-to-hand. All of these attributes identify individuals of merit within the category of the soldier hero. Also notable is that both Fordyce and Grady are credited with overcoming superior forces, each killing two enemy soldiers.⁶⁶ After the exaggerated fashion of propaganda, however, the comic claims that Grady, in fact, overcame five enemy soldiers. This rhetoric is echoed in other forms of popular propaganda, such as *Guadacanal Diary* that claims the American forces “killed four, five, six or even ten for every man we lost.”

As noted previously, all three citations from the President of the United States begin by identifying extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty. Each then continues with an account of the actions that merited the Navy Cross, ending in a summary of the personal attributes of the individual that distinguished them as soldier heroes. Fordyce’s “gallant fighting spirit and personal valor, maintained despite imminent peril to his own life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.”⁶⁷ “Utterly disregarding his extreme danger,” Burdo’s “daring, aggressive, and gallant conduct was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service. In a subsequent operation [...] he gallantly gave his life for his country.”⁶⁸ “Although fully aware that his weapon was not functioning”, Grady’s “tenacious determination and physical endurance” as well as his “outstanding courage and valiant

⁶⁶ This pattern of American troops overcoming superior numbers of enemy forces, indicating that the enemy is, in fact, far inferior individually, is discussed further in the following chapter.

⁶⁷

<https://marines.togetherweserved.com/usmc/servlet/tws.webapp.WebApp?cmd=ShadowBoxProfile&type=Person&ID=211575>

⁶⁸

<https://marines.togetherweserved.com/usmc/servlet/tws.webapp.WebApp?cmd=ShadowBoxProfile&type=Person&ID=211603>

spirit of self-sacrifice were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.”⁶⁹

It is important to note that despite Fordyce being posthumously awarded the Navy Cross after his death in 1972 at the age of fifty-two, twenty-seven years after the armistice that ended the Second World War he is still cited as gallantly “giving his life for his country”. The term ‘gallant’, in this sense, is intended as a synonym for bravery and heroism as opposed to one who is flirtatiously attentive to women. However, the attributes to be noted as recurrent in each of these citations may be summarized as follows: Bravery (“personal valor”, “daring, [...], and gallant conduct”, “outstanding courage”), spectacular violence (“fighting spirit”, “aggressive”, “physical endurance”), recklessness (“despite immanent peril to his own life”, “Utterly disregarding his extreme danger”, “fully aware that his weapon was not functioning”), and loyalty/patriotism (“valiant spirit of self-sacrifice”, “highest traditions of the United States Naval Service”, “gave his life for his country”). As such, the characteristics by which the soldier hero is identified are bravery, spectacular violence, recklessness, loyalty and patriotism. It should also be noted here that the soldier hero also represents the balance between the traditional individualistic hero and the need for group cohesion necessitated by the military context in which they exist. Consequentially, each narrative of the soldier hero also exhibits this balance between individual heroism and the heroism of the group, each member of which is also identified as a soldier hero in their own right.

The United States Marines #1 (Magazine Enterprises, 1943) was initially marketed for juvenile readers.⁷⁰ Evidence for this lies in the advertisement on the final page of the publication for the toy “Commando ‘Krak-A-Jap’ Machine Gun” (*The United States Marines*

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<https://marines.togetherweserved.com/usmc/servlet/tws.webapp.WebApp?cmd=ShadowBoxProfile&type=Person&ID=167149>

⁷⁰ Although whether it was primarily intended for juveniles of near-military age or, indeed, was simply pro-military propaganda published under the guise of a comic for children is open to contention.

#1, rear cover). However, there are certain anomalies in the content of this publication that draw into question the suitability of this comic for children. Contrary to the observations of Special Intelligence Report No.15⁷¹, the artwork is graphically violent. This in itself is no indication that the title was not aimed at children as many juvenile comics contained violent war imagery. However, the imbedded photographic narratives also contain graphic representations of violence and death. One photograph depicts rows of slain Japanese soldiers “half-buried in the tidal sands of the Tenaru River” after their “vicious” attack on US Marine defences (*The United States Marines #1*) (see figure 3.14). These photographic narratives constitute one way in which the publication purports to convey factual war news.⁷² According to the interior accreditation, all photographs contained within the publication “are official photographs from the US Marine Corps” with the exception of a three page advertisement for the film *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943). As John Taylor (1998) highlights: “Horror normally has a central place in news reports. The appearance of bodies is constrained by taste and tone, though dead foreigners are shown in greater detail” (Taylor, 1998, 176. See further, the discussion of ‘spectacular violence’ below and Roeder, 1993). The photograph of figure 3.14 is also strikingly similar to the first photograph to show American casualties, ‘Three Dead Americans On The Beach At Buna’ by George Strock, published in *Time* (1943) (explored in more detail below).

⁷¹ See chapter two.

⁷² The others being textual narratives, illustrated narratives in a photo-realistic style and traditional sequentially panelled comics narratives.

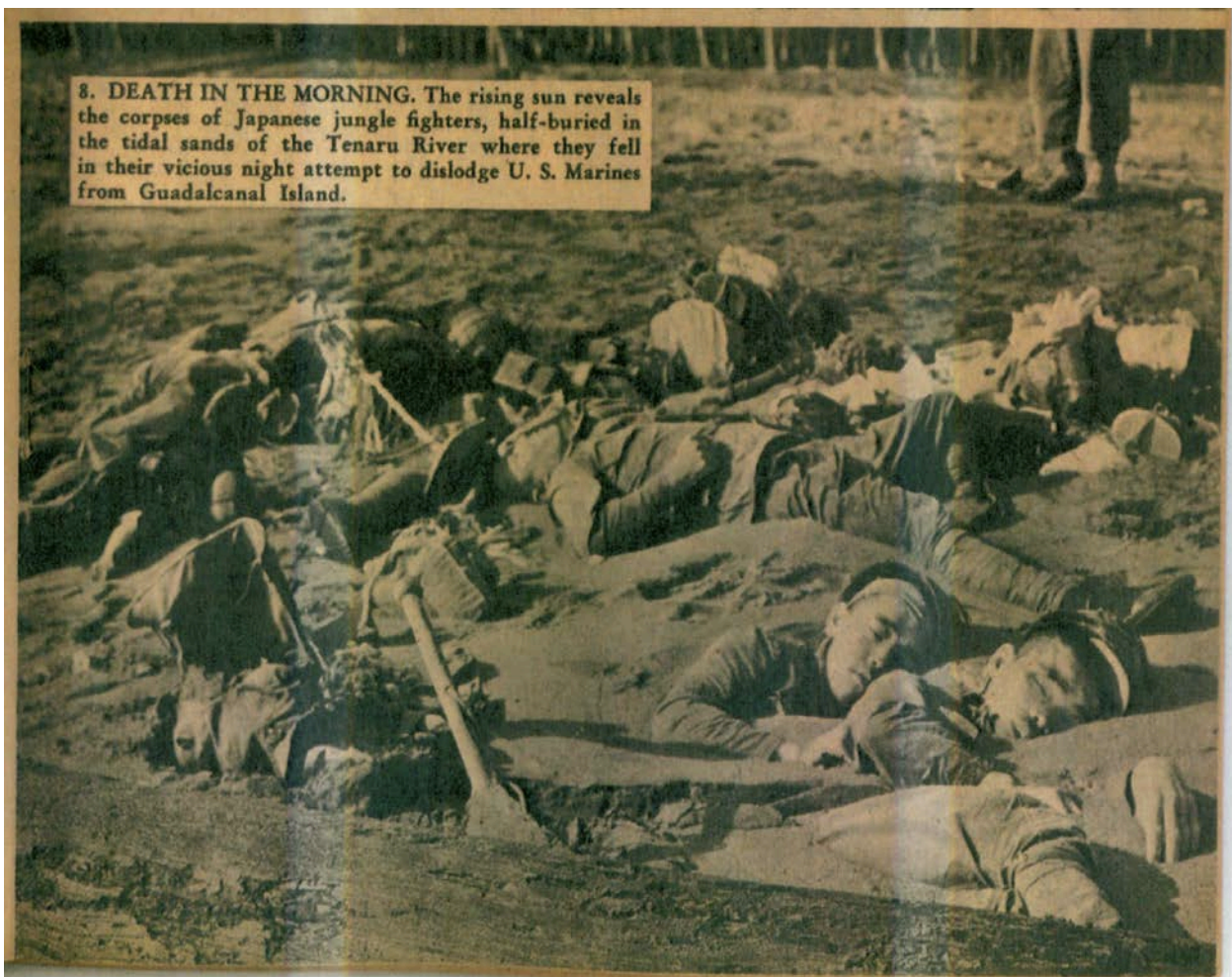


Figure 3.14. "Death In The Morning". *The United States Marines #1*, Magazine Enterprises.

Such fixations on violence and death, even captured through lens of the photographer, are no solid indication that the intended audience consisted of adult males and specifically civilians eligible for military service. However, this comic also contains a recruiting advertisement and a full page advertisement for a Red Cross blood collection drive (ibid., 23). In the 1940s, eligible blood donors were aged between 18 and 50 (Kendrick, 1989, 11).

This publication should be considered as one specifically targeted at adults already enlisted in the army and as pro-recruitment material aimed at those eligible or nearly eligible for military service. For example, there is a five page illustrated history of the Marine Corps (pages 8-12) and a narrative account of "the flying butcher of Japan" who

deliberately used the propeller of his plane to remove an American pilot's right foot while he was parachuting from the wreckage of his aircraft. As with much propaganda that expresses (often exaggerated or false) atrocities committed during the war by opposing nations, this narrative is entitled "This is the enemy" (*The United States Marines* # 1, 1943, 39).⁷³ This clear consumer demographic demonstrates that the military institutions of the United States consciously used comics as propaganda with the cooperation of Sullivan's various publishing groups.

After the first issue, *The United States Marines* dropped the semblance of marketing itself as a children's publication. Magazine Enterprises' later war themed publications, *The United States Marines* # 3 and 4 (1944) and *The American Air Forces* #1 (1944) and #3 (1945) contained no semblance of being suitable for children. Instead, these publications contain content (advertising as well as narrative) that was clearly aimed at an adult demographic of enlistment age and those already enlisted.

A useful comparison here may be drawn between the content of *The United States Marines* #1 and *Devil Dogs Comics*⁷⁴ (1942, figure 3.15) that was created by Street and Smith Publications who also published content approved by the United States government (Hirsch, 2014). The former publication is dedicated to the 168th anniversary of the US Marine Corps and the latter to the 167th anniversary of the same institution. Both publications contain an account of the history of the Marine Corps. In *Devil Dogs Comics* this narrative is told by the personified spirit of the Marine Corps, a symbolic hero who died under the command of John Paul Jones when boarding the British vessel the *Serapis*, to two Marines facing certain death against superior forces on Wake Island. Once the history of the Corps has been recounted, the Japanese attack and the Marines, having exhibited each of the tropes of the soldier hero identified earlier, defend "with their life blood, ground

⁷³ For an account of this incident that evidenced the reliability of the account contained in *The United States Marines* # 1 see <http://www.historynet.com/archie-donahue-wwii-ace-pilot.htm>

⁷⁴ The term 'Devil Dog' is a nickname given to a member of the US Marine Corps (see further Clarke (2013)).

they pledged to hold till death” (*Devil Dogs Comics*, 1942, 19). Consequentially, the spirit of the Marine Corps heralds them as a valiant “part of Marine tradition” (ibid.). A similar historical account of the Marine Corps in *The United States Marines # 1* begins with the destruction of the US ship *Enterprise* on Lake Champlain (1776). It continues to recount key events in the history of the Corps with particular focus on the battle between the *Bon Homme Richard* and the *Serapis* (1779) during which the American Marines (but not the sailors) display each of the attributes identified as belonging to the category of the soldier hero. The narrative concludes with a form of chronological circularity in recounting a victory for the US aircraft carrier *Enterprise* against the Japanese at Guadalcanal (1942).



Figure 3.15. *Devil Dogs Comics* (Street and Smith Publications, 1942).

The United States Marines #1 contains a seven page comics narrative account of ‘Johnny Devil Dog’, who “used to be the kid around the corner. Now he’s a first class fighting man [...] grinning like a kid through the battle grime” who might also have “been called Johnny American” (*The United States Marines #1*, 1943, 50). *Devil Dogs Comics* contains a written narrative entitled “What it means to be a US Marine” that is “written specially by a General of the US Marines” that details the particulars of a Marine officer’s training to a “keen-minded lad fresh from the campus of a large Midwestern university” (*Devil Dogs Comics*, 1942, 21).⁷⁵ Here the rhetoric in itself is indicative of the target consumer demographic for the propaganda contained in this publication.

Though the former is an illustrated sequential narrative and the latter a textual narrative, both accounts incorporate all elements of the soldier hero identified in this study. For example, the unidentified General states that it takes “stamina” to make military theories practicable and that success “depends upon every man’s ability to endure any hardship” (ibid. 22) as well as their skills in combat (ibid. 23). A Marine’s loyalty to the Marine Corps derives from “feeling the pride of accomplishment” in training that equates to “a measure of pride in his Corps” (ibid.) that builds into a “fanatical love for their country and their Corps” (ibid. 64). There are a number of references to the bravery of the Corps in conflict situations and there is even an account of Private John Joseph Kelly who, during the First World War, was a “hell-raiser in and out of action” and “made the war a personal affair”, attacking numerous enemy machine gun posts and winning a number of medals as a consequence (ibid.). In ‘Johnny Devil Dog’ the Marines brave an experimental take-off in a glider from an aircraft carrier, fight hand-to-hand with the enemy, charge recklessly against superior numbers of Japanese, lament the (apparent) loss of a close comrade,

⁷⁵ Though the General writing this piece is unidentified, there similarity of these narratives and the content of both publications in general provides evidence to support the hypothesis that it is likely to be Brigadier General Denig of the US Marine Corps division of Public Relations. In fitting with Denig’s reputation, part of this narrative states, “I get a big kick out of talking about the Corps” (*Devil Dogs Comics*, 1942, 22).

and capture an enemy general hiding in a cellar in reward for their efforts (*The United States Marines* # 1, 1943, 50 – 56).

Having identified the attributes that characterize the soldier hero, the following section analyses in greater depth the particular attribute of spectacular violence. While strength (in one form or another) is an almost universal attribute of the hero throughout history, spectacular violence as a trait is usually assigned solely to the character of the villain. As the following section will demonstrate, spectacular violence formed a necessary element of militaristic heroism and recruitment propaganda during a period of total warfare.

Spectacular Violence

As mentioned previously, both titles published by Vincent Sullivan with the cooperation of the United States Armed Forces, *The United States Marines* (1943 – 1944) and *The American Air Forces*⁷⁶ (1944 – 1945), depicted photographic accounts of enemy casualties. Within their illustrated narratives there are also remarkable representations of American casualties that are stylistically similar to photographic images of the enemy victims of conflict. As there were no published photographs of American casualties until very late in the war, these illustrations provide a unique, early depiction of the martial realities of warfare, albeit imaginatively presented via comics. “American policymakers withheld pictures of American dead at the outset of World War II because they feared [viewers might withdraw their support for the war], then later [...] effectively made use of the pictures to intensify public commitment to the war effort” (Roeder, 1993, 5-6). This censorship of the realities of war ended in 1943 when *Time* magazine published a

⁷⁶ *The American Air Forces* #1 (1944) was published by The Flying Cadet Publishing Company. *The American Air Forces* # 3 (1945) was published by Life's Romances Publishing Company Inc. Both were edited by Vincent Sullivan and subsidiaries of Magazine Enterprises.

photograph by George Strock of three dead Americans buried in the sand at Buna beach (see figure 3.16).



Figure 3.16. George Strock, 'Three Dead Americans On The Beach At Buna' (*Time*, Sept. 1943).

In one particular instance in the comic, the bodies of deceased American Marines are shown in the foreground floating amid violent surf after a beach-head landing while their fellow soldiers continue the assault against a distant pill-box in the background (see figure 3.17). One wounded Marine is receiving attention from a colleague on the beach, presumably a corpsman. Another hangs motionless and seemingly dead against the beach-head fortifications. Counting five deceased Marines in the ocean foreground added to the one dead and one injured man on the beach, this image contains the same number

of American casualties as uninjured Marines still fighting. However, this panel stands in stark contrast to the more usual depictions of warfare in comics.



Figure 3.17. "By Nightfall The Marines Had Taken The Pier". Panel showing American casualties during an assault on a beachhead pillbox. *The United States Marines # 1* (Magazine Enterprises, 1943).

Both figures 3.16 and 3.17 exist in stark contrast with comics concerning US casualties created by soldiers themselves (analysed in greater detail in the following section). Figure 3.18 is one of three illustrations within the Moore collection in the Veterans' History Project at the Library of Congress that deals directly with American casualties and depicts the emotional reaction of a soldier to this event. Though this illustration recounts the American victory at the Battle of Okinawa (April – June, 1945) as a

headline on the front page of a newspaper, this image is offset by a Western Union telegram on which, in similar fashion to the headline of the newspaper, is written the line “We regret to inform you...” This indicates the great loss of life connected to this victory and the suffering that the victory will bring to family members on the home front. Both these illustrations frame a soldier standing upon a hill whose head is held low as though in prayer or mourning for the casualties that the battle necessitated. Here Moore is possibly illustrating his own grief at the loss of a comrade. The dark background adds to the mood of the illustration, shaded as though indicative of the soldier’s emotional state and spotlighting the central figure of the pensive soldier. The notion of a soldier reflecting on the human cost of victory is not common. More frequent is the idea encapsulated by Alfred Lord Tennyson in the lines: “Thiers not to make reply, / Thiers not to question why, / Thiers but to do and die”. In contrast to Tennyson, this artefact has provided a space for Moore to enter into a personal discourse concerning his emotional reaction to the events of the Battle of Okinawa. Moore’s comic here indicates that soldiers have a different attitude to the meaning of the word ‘victory’ than that reported in the mass media and other forms of pro-war propaganda. On this occasion, however, the loyalty that members of the armed forces felt towards their colleagues is categorized by the shared experience of grief and loss, rather than a humorous reaction the rigmarole of military training (see later in this chapter).

Figure 3.19 shows an illustration of a soldier’s “gloom” at the death of two of his colleagues (his “buddies”). As with the previous illustration (figure 6.6), this comic provides rare insight into the emotional reaction of a soldier to the loss of their colleagues. In fact, this image provides evidence that comics themselves can constitute a coping mechanism by providing a discursive space in which to express emotions, in particular negative emotions such as anxiety, frustration and grief. Further evidence for this emotional connection between soldiers, indicative of the loyalty that existed between them is shown

in figure 3.20. Here the hero expresses his anxiety and frustration at having “2 buddies on patrol” and facing the obvious dangers that service on the front lines entails.

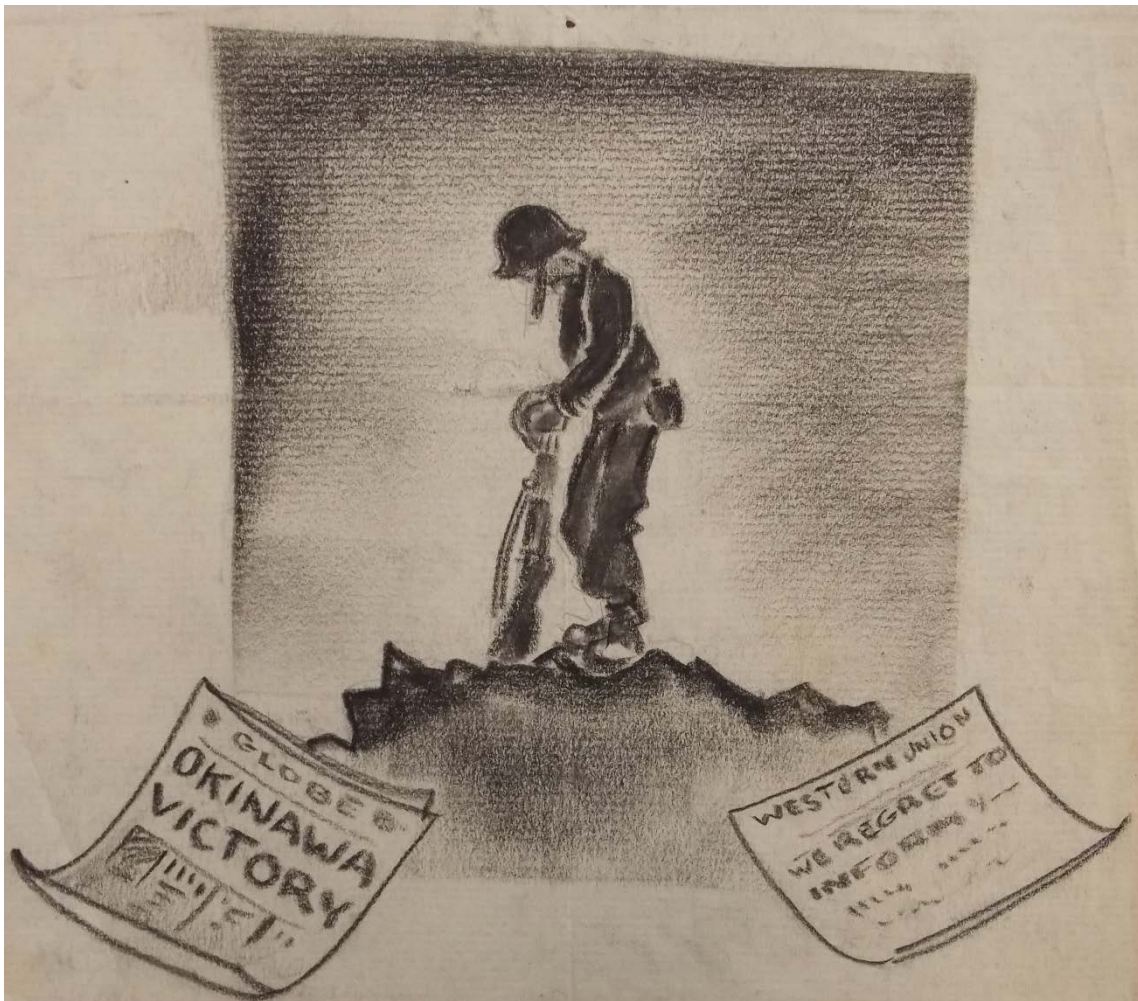


Figure 3.18. Moore, Frank (undated). Untitled. Unpublished. One of three illustrations of American casualties and Moore's reaction. Veterans History Project: Library of Congress.

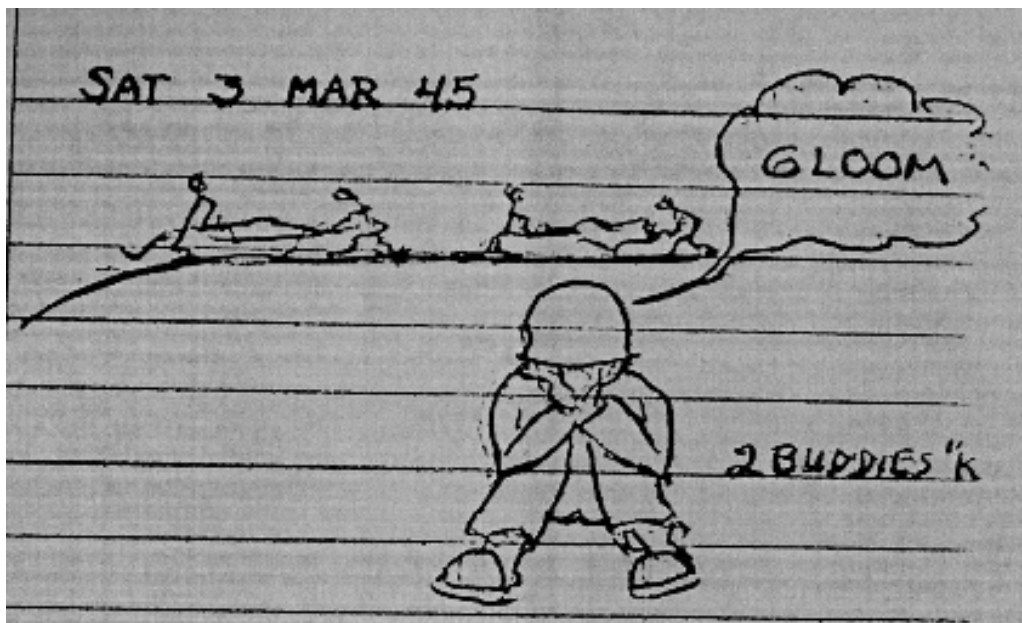


Figure 3.19. Gardner, Phillip Dean (1944-1945) Untitled comics diary. Unpublished. Veterans History Project: Library of Congress.

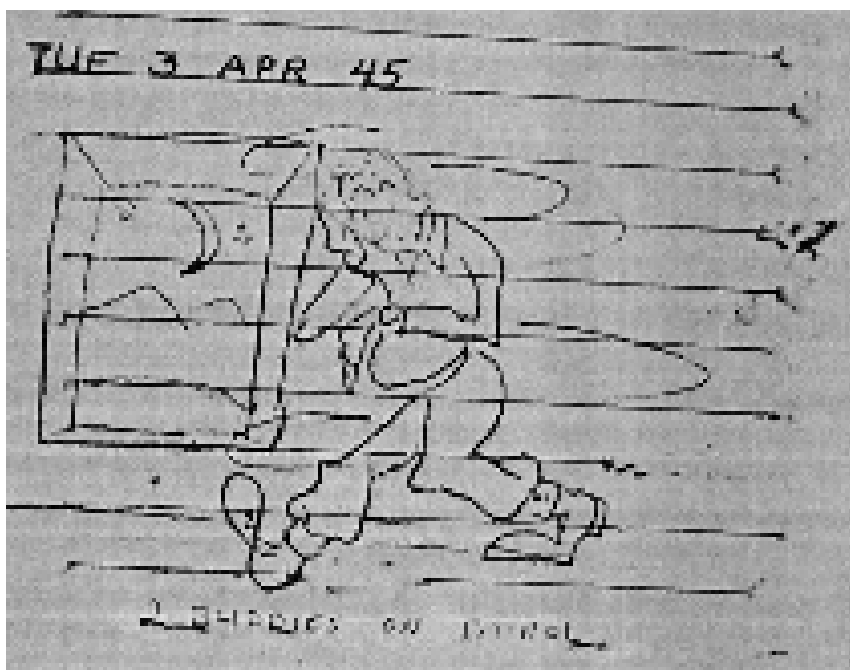


Figure 3.20. Gardner, Phillip Dean (1944-1945) Untitled comics diary. Unpublished. Veterans History Project: Library of Congress.

As well as illustrated depictions of US casualties, these comics also included occasional photographs of actual American fatalities. In one instance, the reader's attention is drawn to the dead body of an American Marine who was "killed instantly" and photographed during an attack on a Japanese tank and machine-gun nest on Bougainville

Island (*The United States Marines* # 3. See figure 3.21). The terminology here is important as there is no indication that the Marine suffered. Therefore, despite this comic presenting a wartime American fatality, readers of this comic are rhetorically shielded from the reality of the event to a certain extent.

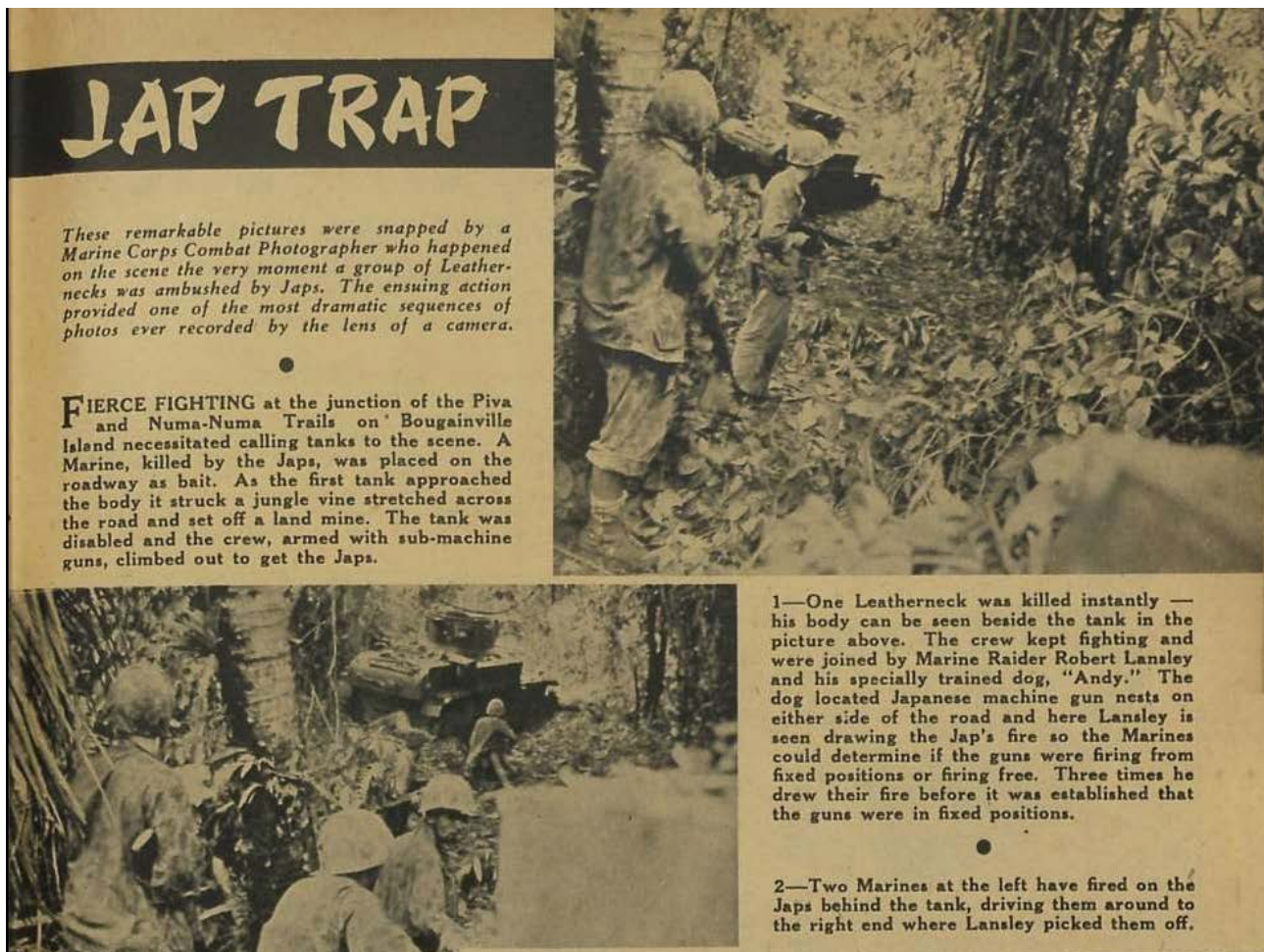


Figure 3.21. *The United States Marines* #3 (1944)

The violence suffered by the US forces pales in comparison to the repeated images of graphic and brutal violence inflicted upon the enemy who, in almost every instance in these publications, were Japanese.⁷⁷ The repeated representations of death-by-fire reveals this means of execution, particularly as the hands of American troops wielding flame-throwers, to be a popular favourite in the minds of the artists, editor, and audience

⁷⁷ The only two exceptions to this observation within the publications of Magazine Enterprises and its subsidiaries occur once each in both issues of *The American Air Forces*.

alike (see figures 3.22 and 3.23).⁷⁸ The spectacular violence of these images is reinforced by photographic narratives. The photographs in question depict the aftermath of the illustrated action and clearly show the charred bodies of Japanese casualties. In one instance, two flamed Japanese corpses on the island of Namur are framed by an American Marine standing casually beside them holding his flamethrower aloft (*The United States Marines* # 3). This image is immediately followed by one of a mass grave of Japanese casualties on the same island. The accompanying text draws the reader's attention to the Japanese convention of committing suicide or 'seppuku' as opposed to the dishonour of surrendering or being captured (ibid.).⁷⁹



Figure 3.22. "Now It's *Your* Turn, Monkeyman...!" Panel showing spectacular violence against a Japanese fighter-pilot. *The American Air Forces* # 3 (Magazine Enterprises, 1945).

One particular page of *The United States Marines* #3 contains panels depicting a series of graphically violent images that, while brutally representative of the essential

⁷⁸ For an in-depth discussion of the connection between death-by-fire and the dehumanisation of the enemy in terms of vermin see the following chapter.

⁷⁹ Again, for an in-depth discussion of comics' categorisation of this cultural practice as an attribute of their dehumanisation of the enemy see the following chapter.

nature of warfare, are also extraordinarily vicious (see figure 3.24). The first panel of this sequence shows a Japanese infantry man being engulfed in double flame on the island of Tarawa by two Marine flame-throwers as he throws up his arms in agony beside the bodies of two other Japanese casualties. The posture of the Japanese casualty signifies extreme suffering. The following panel depicts a US Marine shooting a Japanese infantry man in the chest. The Japanese soldier is shown to be on his knees before the Marine. This image also contains the corpses of two Japanese soldiers in the foreground. The third image in this ruthless sequence represents the “bloody business of mopping up” as a Japanese soldier is bayoneted by a youthful Marine who performs this action without breaking stride (*ibid.*). The final panel on this page again draws the reader’s attention to the Japanese convention of committing seppuku. In this panel, a defeated Japanese soldier is shown sitting inside a fortification facing the barrel of his rifle. The detail in this image is striking. The soldier is illustrated without his boots on, alluding to the need to apply trigger-pressure with his toes. The trajectory of the bullet is also shown passing through the Japanese soldier’s skull. In this way once again, the possibilities of comics illustration provide scope for a fixation on the “climactic moment of death” (Taylor, 1998, 79).⁸⁰ A similar Japanese suicide is shown in the foreground having already committed seppuku.⁸¹

⁸⁰ See also Murray (2011, 222).

⁸¹ This illustration is arguably derived from an earlier photograph of two Japanese soldiers having committed *seppuku* (*United States Marines #2*, 1944). See chapter three for a discussion of this photograph.



Figure 3.23. "Nippon's Sun Starts Down". Photo-realistic panel showing a flamethrower attack on Japanese troops. *The United States Marines # 3* (Magazine Enterprises, 1944).



Figure 3.24. Page showing spectacular violence towards the Japanese enemy including seppuku. *The United States Marines* # 3 (Magazine Enterprises, 1944).⁸²

⁸² The final panel in this illustration bears a close resemblance to a photograph of Japanese soldiers after committing seppuku that was published in *The United States Marines* #2, 1944. This is discussed further in chapter three.

These images and many others within Magazine Enterprises' war-orientated publications reinforce the brutal violence of modern warfare. The combination of photo-narrative accounts of conflict in the Pacific amalgamated with photo-realistic illustration and more traditional comics artwork identifies these particular publications as unique cultural products and records of the period. This combination of photo-realistic illustration, comics 'cartoon' illustration and photographic narrative sequences endorsed by the US military unique to these publications marks them as possessing a potential sphere of violence unrivalled even by other war related comics. This evidence contradicts the OWI's conclusion that comics misrepresented realistic violence, certainly in the case of comics intended for consumption by adult and, specifically, military audiences. Though there are instances of spectacular violence within comics designed for other demographics⁸³, these lack the brutality and realism of the images within *The United States Marines* and *The American Air Forces*. Further, due to their rare depictions of American casualties, their consumption by American soldiers actively serving or eligible to enlist, and their endorsement by the US military, it is likely that these publications were intended to fuel an aggressive hatred towards the enemy. The creation of such hatred is both an element of propaganda and a requirement of the soldier hero who must hate the enemy in order to kill them (Hirsch, 2014, 451). As with the hero as role model previously identified (Klapp, 2014), these images arguably also provided role models to be followed in the annihilation of the enemy by military readers (Hatfield et al, 2013, xiv). As such, Magazine Enterprises were clearly identified as being an asset to the nation during this period of total war. The

⁸³ For example, *Uncle Sam Quarterly* (Quality Comics).

spectacular violence inherent in these comics reveals that the soldier hero during total war was required both to hate the enemy and to exterminate them.⁸⁴

This section has demonstrated the various traits that characterize the soldier hero within Second World War era comics and has identified the particular necessity of encouraging hatred and violence towards the enemy at a time of total war. The following section addresses the necessary cooperation, already alluded to, between all three categories of hero.

The Cooperation of the Three Types of the Hero

At the denouement of the opening story in *Uncle Sam Quarterly #1* (1941), Uncle Sam and Buddy, backed by the United States Marines, resolve the conflict in traditional comics' style: a two page fist-fight. In the lead story of *Uncle Sam Quarterly # 2* (1941) the symbolic hero again only achieves success with the help of the soldier hero, in this instance the US Navy. In the same fashion as *U.S.A. Is Ready* (1941), the entire final page of this latter story is dedicated to illustrating the might of America's naval forces and reassuring the reader that the US possesses strong defences against invasion. The narrative repeats the phrase "great" in a variety of instances. For example, "And from the great air fields comes the mighty air arm" (*Uncle Sam Quarterly #2*, 1941). "The great coastal guns are brought into play" (ibid.). "And as the sun sets on the greatest naval battle in history... the American Navy stands alone on a sea of wreckage" (ibid.).

⁸⁴ It must be noted here that even *Devil Dogs Comics*, identified in this study as pro-enlistment propaganda targeted at young adults approaching recruitment age contains numerous illustrations encouraging extreme violence towards the enemy. In the case of *Devil Dogs Comics*, however, the focus is on the more standard forms of death-by-bullets or bayonets and the violence of these images is significantly reduced in comparison to Magazine Enterprises' publications.

Uncle Sam Quarterly # 4 (1942) opens with two members of the US armed forces, one a Marine and the other a member of the Navy, flirting with two American girls who comically reject them by knocking them both off a pier. They are subsequently rescued by Uncle Sam who takes them for coffee to dry out and warm up. After hearing reports that “giant creatures” are “fighting with the enemy forces” on “three fronts,” Uncle Sam, Buddy, Tex (Navy) and Bill (Marine) set off to confront these “creatures” (*Uncle Sam Quarterly # 4*, 1942). In accordance with Ponsonby’s principles, the enemy are inhuman and their machinations are horrific. By way of contrast, the heroes are self-evidently noble, humane and good. It is subsequently revealed that each of these three monsters are aligned with the three major Axis powers: Nazi Germany, fascist Italy and Imperial Japan. The team of American ideological and soldier heroes first confront the Nazi-aligned monster who has “broken through the Russian lines at Utzk” (ibid.). Through the close cooperation of the ideological and soldier heroes, each of the three monsters are eventually overcome and destroyed.

Here this comic also serves the re-identification of the Russians as allies of America whereas, formerly, they were enemies (for more on this see Murray, 2011. See figure 3.25). A further instance of this within the sample of this study occurs in the final pages of Churchill’s story in *Real Heroes # 4* (1942) in which Churchill and a Russian everyman reminiscent of but unidentified as Stalin (the only instance within the sample of *Real Heroes* that could be interpreted as this leader) wave to each other across Europe. This image also signifies that the Nazis, despite controlling nearly all of mainland Europe are, in fact, surrounded and are being forced to fight a war on two fronts. In the panel from *Uncle Sam Quarterly #4*, Russians are characterised as “brave” while the Nazis are depicted as inhuman beasts, exemplified by the repeated dehumanizing phrase “hordes.”

Comics also depicted close cooperation between the domestic and foreign variants of the political hero category. The penultimate panel of *The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt*

(1943) show the President and Churchill shaking hands across the Atlantic, framed by maps of the United States and Great Britain. Britain is rendered entirely out of scale in the illustration, greatly exaggerated to a similar size as the US. This implies that the two allies are geographically similar and, therefore, military equivalents. The text also reinforces the visual message of cooperation, indicating that this handshake “symbolizes not only the United and determined will of the US and Great Britain to win, but that of the twenty-seven United Nations as well” (*The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 1942).



Figure 3.25. Panel characterising the Russians as ‘brave’ allies (*Uncle Sam Quarterly* #4, Quality Comics, 1942).

In similar fashion, the cover of *Real Heroes* # 4 (1942) is intersected by a ‘V’ containing the flags of the Allied Nations and depicting the main political heroes of the Allies: Roosevelt, Churchill, and Chiang Kai Shek, again noticeably without the inclusion of Joseph Stalin (see figure 3.1). Notable in relation to the American audience of this publication, the latter foreign leaders occupy the bottom of the page while Roosevelt is

highlighted through his prominent, central location between the upright lines of the intersecting “V” and with the title-word “Heroes” across his forehead. Despite this visual hierarchy, the cover still communicates cooperation between the Allies’ hero leaders necessary during total war.

As with the cooperation between foreign and domestic political heroes, comics also incorporated the cooperation of foreign and domestic soldier heroes into their narratives. This message indicates a practical necessity of conflict in which members of the armed forces of one nation must cooperate with members of the armed forces of its allies. However, when such narratives do occur they are framed in such a way as to imply the superiority of the American forces, often coming to the rescue of the soldier heroes of other nations. For example, figure 3.26 is part of a narrative recounting the cooperation between the British-India ‘Special Force’ known as the Chindits and the US First Commando Air Force.



Figure 3.26. “Those Yanks Are Bloody Well Savin’ Our ‘Ides”. *The American Air Forces* #2 (Magazine Enterprises, 1944).

A further necessity element of propaganda during total war is the depiction of patriotic cooperation between America's political heroes and the armed forces. For example, the final pages of *The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt* are dedicated to reinforcing the support of members of the American military for their Commander-in-Chief. The final panel of the comic depicts members of the American Armed Forces at attention and facing the Statue of Liberty while a US fighter pilot strafes an enemy naval vessel. The text reinforces that Roosevelt, in reference to the war "will not lose this, the greatest battle of his life" (ibid.). The final page of this propaganda comic gives a full list of the members of the United Nations and echoes the rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence, harking back to the struggle against tyranny and the forces of oppression with which the narrative opened, to "restore liberty and justice for all" (ibid.). This example combines rhetorical and visual propaganda elements that can be interpreted as signifying a cooperation between all three types of hero. The iconography of the Statue of Liberty and rhetoric evoking the Declaration of Independence (1776) are combined with images of the political hero (Roosevelt) and the soldier hero (members of the Armed Forces).

Similarly, *Real Heroes # 4* (1942) begins with a splash page dedicated to Franklin Roosevelt. The President is illustrated with calm and confident features standing before a dramatically rendered background of American warships and airplanes. In front of Roosevelt's right lapel is the shield of the United States bordered by a ribbon in the colours of the American flag. The shield bears the legend "US Commander-In-Chief Franklin D. Roosevelt" and narrates a quote from the president: "We, and those united with us, will make decisions with courage and determination!" This image shows the cooperation between the symbolic, soldier and political heroes propagated by comics and necessary to the American total war effort.

Each of the three types of hero that occur in these commercial propaganda comics and the attributes they exhibit have now been identified. As has the necessity of

cooperation between each of these types and the way in this cooperation is depicted. As a counterpoint, the following section analyses the role of the hero that occurs within unpublished comics created by American soldiers during their military service.

Unpublished Second World War Comics By Members Of The United States Armed Forces

This section examines a selection of unpublished materials by American veterans of the Second World War collected in the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress. This archive gathers the unpublished works of American veterans since, and including, the Second World War. In doing so, this section posits the argument that the types of hero and enemy identified in this study only occur in comics published commercially. Comics created by American servicemen do not exhibit these categories, instead resisting the dominant stereotypes such as the dehumanization of the enemy and jingoistic propaganda. These texts constitute a discursive space into which members of the Armed Forces projected their anxieties and recorded their personal experiences of the conflict, exhibiting a connection to the particulars of everyday American life. This is referred to as 'grassroots patriotism'. The texts also contain a counter-hegemonic discourse on military authority and routine. The content of these artefacts also reveals the profound influence that comics had upon those involved in active service during this conflict. The fact that these servicemen chose the comics form to express their experiences and, in one instance, to record their daily involvement in this conflict, reveals the importance of the medium as a subject for historical academic analysis as a discourse through which soldiers could express their identity (Du Pont, 2015, 111-112; Holman and Kelly, 2001, 262).

Recent scholarship on the comics that occur in First World War trench publications has shown that soldier produced artefacts provide valuable insight into the real experiences of frontline warfare and various aspects of the *mentalité* of those involved, such as their emotions and expectations (Chapman and Ellin, 2012; 2014; Chapman et al, 2015, 7). These articles depict shared attitudes to the collective experience of assimilation into the new community of the armed forces and the shift in personal identity that participation within 'imagined communities' such as the armed forces brings about (Allen and Thorsen, 2009; Anderson, 1991; Chapman and Nuttall, 2011). In many instances, soldiers felt the need to create a record of their experiences and comics provided a unique method of achieving this. This chapter argues that this phenomenon also occurred during the Second World War, despite the fact that the comics analysed in this sample were not published in the same way as trench publications.

The soldiers who created the comics analysed in this sample had all seen active service. They were amateurs who illustrated their experiences for their own personal record. These productions, therefore, differ fundamentally from the comics contained in trench publications that were mainly produced by soldiers who were amateur illustrators for consumption by their fellow colleagues on the front line (Chapman and Ellin, 2012; 2014). However, there exists a number of similarities in the motivations for the production of both types of comics. For example, the creation of both served to alleviate boredom, constituted a form of personal diary or travelogue, and exhibited the tendency among soldiers to use humour as a coping strategy in dealing with their wartime experiences (Du Pont, 2015, 115; Holman and Kelly, 2001, 262; Coupe, 1969, 90). This latter motivation accounts for these comics' portrayal of everyday situations and generally humorous content as opposed to dealing directly with the violent realities of conflict often exhibited in popular war comics created by civilians. In fact, none of the content of the soldier-illustrated comics analysed in this chapter represent actual violence in any noteworthy

way. Rather, these comics offer insightful commentary concerning the shared experiences of soldiers and the realities of everyday military life as a member of the armed forces when distanced from actual combat.

Though often imaginative in nature, these unpublished comics are closely tied to the military experience that encourages collective, albeit hierarchical, identity. Much of the content analysed here uses humour as a way of reacting to or rebelling against the regimented routine of training, the food available to them or the undemocratic hierarchy of military authority. The publication of these comics in the form of the creator's (or the creator's family's) submission of them for preservation in the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project reveals the extent to which these and similar comics contributed to the sense of community that soldiers identified with and the important first-hand experiential record that they constitute.

Irwin notes that "in addition to the truthfulness of words, visual depictions may be more or less tied to the actual appearances of people, places, and settings they purport to depict" (Irwin, 107). Though comics are not usually photo-realistic, they are often simplified from reality yet are still representative of real situations and persons. This gives journalistic comics narratives what Irwin terms a "humanizing form of reference," meaning that although these representations are abstracted from reality they are, at the same time, indicative of the actual experiences of the artist (*ibid.*) The amateur Second World War comics analysed in this section generally reflect the banalities of everyday military routine. Created during training and active frontline service (though often undated), these comics also reveal humorous or tragic aspects of the lived experiences of soldiers and the similarity of these experiences throughout the conflict. In particular, during their training and introduction to undemocratic military routine and hierarchy.

One of the major advantages of the expression of personal experiences through the medium of comics is their capacity to communicate “emotionally weighty content” in an effective and easily understood fashion (ibid., 110). This section also highlights an early example of a genre of comics that has recently been termed “graphic travelogue” (ibid., 112). Finally, this section concludes with a commentary upon the categories of heroism exhibited in the comics produced by soldiers themselves compared to those that were commercially produced for their consumption and containing propaganda created in accordance with the requirements of the American government and military institutions.

Illustrated without panel borders and arguably inspired by Baker's *Sad Sack* and Mauldin's 'Willie and Joe', figure 3.27 depicts the morning routine of a soldier in training and the desire to spend as long in bed as possible despite the 5.30 am wake-up call. Norman Schatell's⁸⁵ (1943) presumably autobiographical protagonist does not rise from his bunk until the very last minute, hurriedly gets dressed and then returns to bed fully clothed in order to steal a few extra minutes comfort and rest. At 6.00 am the character hastily rushes out for “chow”.⁸⁶ After breakfast, Schatell's character again returns to bed before joining his classmates at the last moment for “school” at 6.50 am.

This account of the morning routine at a military training facility is at once both humorous, reflective of the regimented structure of military life and also a depiction of the trainee's sceptical attitude to authority. Minor forms of rebellion often involve a certain degree of humour that, in turn, acts as a form of limited control and relief (Holman and Kelly, 2001; Hünig, 2002). Taking an illustrative example from another propaganda medium, that of film, the anti-authority song 'Bless 'Em All' is sung by the troops as they

⁸⁵ Norman Schatell was born in New Jersey and served in the U.S. Navy between 1943 and 1946. His highest rank was Gunner's Mate Third Class. He served in the United States, Australia, the Philippines and Hawaii. During his civilian life he was an artist though there is no known record of him working in the comics medium prior to the creation of this artefact or subsequent to his demobilization.

⁸⁶ “Recruits are well-fed during basic training. Three times a day, trainees will be fed a balanced meal, either in the field, or in the cafeteria (which is also called the defac, mess hall, or chow hall)” (Thompson, 2002, 139)

dig foxholes in *Guadacanal diary* (1943). In the case of Schatell's protagonist, he internalizes his initial rebellion, swearing in a thought-bubble at the initial order to "Hitthedeck". Coupled with this, the character says "Well... They needn't be so loud about it!" The character's speech, however, is much smaller than the orders, written in block capitals, indicating that the rebellious phrase is spoken at a surreptitious volume so as not to be overheard by authority. This is similarly the case when the character is ordered to "Falloutferchow!!" and consequentially utters, "I hoidja da foist time". This latter turn of phrase provides evidence that this illustration is autobiographical as the speech is written in the dialect of New Jersey, Schatell's birth place. The amalgamation of the orders to "Hitthedeck" and "Falloutferchow" into a single word in each instance is both a humorous construct or a military phenomenon and an indicative reference to one reality of the military experience.

A further humorous interpretation of military training occurs in the illustration of the food that constitutes Schatell's chow. Trainees often receive only fifteen minutes to eat their meals (Thompson, 2002, 92). This is also indicated by the fact that the recruit is back in bed by 6.35, having only entered the cafeteria or mess hall at 6.15. The haste of the experience is illustrated by the food being thrown onto the trainee's tray. The final item to be thrown at the recruit is labelled as "shingle". This is military slang for creamed or chopped beef served on toast, is short for 'shit on shingle' (or SOS), and is notoriously disgusting (Wimes, 2012, 16). Evidently, Schatell shared this opinion of shingle as his protagonist mutters "I shoulda stood [*sic*] in bed".

Schatell's dedication of this illustration "To the students and alumni of Great Lakes Service School" highlights the camaraderie felt among servicemen towards their colleagues and those who have undergone similar experiences in the fashion of an imagined community (Anderson, 1991). This dedication exhibits the loyalty to one's colleagues that has been previously identified as an attribute of the soldier hero (Moss,

2011, 9). In this instance, however, the loyalty is based on the shared experience of training and not conflict or nationality. This comic, as a humorous discourse on one universal aspect of military training, indicates that shared experience in itself, in this instance coupled with the shared desire for minor rebellion catalyzed by the experience, can contribute to a soldier's sense of group cohesion, shared ideology and solidarity (Du Pont, 2015, 111-112; van Dijk, 2006, 115; Holman and Kelly, 2001, 262).

Figure 3.28 recounts a similar view of the experience of military training. In this instance, however, the comic is highly satirical rather than playfully humorous. Entitled 'Education A La Mass Production', Frank Moore's⁸⁷ (undated) four panel comic presents a discourse on loss of identity for the individual as a consequence of Moore's military training. The first panel illustrates a number of de-individualised characters who have all arrived from the University of Connecticut, indicated by the attached tag reading "To Uni. Of Conn." As was demonstrated by the rhetoric of 'A Special Message For The Youth Of America By A General Of The Marines', in *Devil Dog Comics*, universities were targets of recruitment drives for the armed forces throughout the conflict. However, in this instance the tag on Moore's characters indicates their having been sent to the University of Connecticut to receive training as officers in the Army Specialist Training Program (Roy, 2001, 1938).

Similar to Schatell's depicted lack of enthusiasm for "school", Moore's satirical depiction of the soldiers' lesson in the second panel is, in itself, a minor form of rebellion against the rigmarole of military life. It also indicates the monotony of this aspect of military routine, the importance of which is negated by the fact that it is pre-recorded, consists of "Blah, blah, blah" and the indication in the third panel that everyone has passed. This latter panel also shows the consequence of receiving this education on the individual as after

⁸⁷ Frank Jay Moore, Jr. was born in New Jersey and lived in Florida. He served in the U.S. Army between 1942 and 1967 and saw active service during both the Second World War and the Korean War (1950-1953). He retired from the Army at the rank of Lieutenant.

each soldier has passed, they are reduced in stature, losing a 'head's worth' of their height. In the final panel the post-graduation troops are huddled together and tagged "To ?" indicating that their future destination is both unknown to them and beyond their control. In this final panel they are also depicted in a near identical fashion to the opening panel. The only noticeable difference that has resulted from their training is that their posture and the position of their legs has changed to be more reminiscent of soldiers standing to 'attention'. All this indicates Moore's reaction to the undemocratic de-individualisation of military reality and indicates an oppositional position, in Hall's terms, in relation to the pro-military and pro-patriotic fervour of his period.

Evidence indicating the importance of comics' heroes and other cultural hero figures to military individuals is exhibited in figure 4.3 (in the following chapter). In reaction to a torpedo launch by the Nazi U-boat is the exclamation, "Can't someone do something? Where's Superman!! Where's Doc Savage!! X-9! Dick Tracy! or even Dolph Camilli - I can't look!"⁸⁸ All of the heroes listed by Moore are from comic books or comic strips with the exception of Dolph Camilli who was a popular baseball player of the period. This association between imaginary heroes and sporting heroes further evidences the equation of heroism and sporting prowess categorized heroism, particularly the category of political hero, as analysed previously and exhibited ubiquitously in propaganda (for more on this see Blum, 1976).

⁸⁸ Superman first appeared as a character in *Action Comics #1* (1938). Doc Savage was a recurring character in pulp magazines and novels during the 1930s and later appeared in comics. Secret Agent X-9 first appeared in a serial comic strip created by Dashiell Hammett and Alex Raymond (1934), syndicated by King Features. The *Dick Tracy* comic strip first appeared in 1931 and was distributed by the Chicago Tribune New York News Syndicate. Dolph Camilli (1907 – 1997) was an American Major League baseball player.



Figure 3.27. "Dedicated To The Students + Alumni Of Great Lakes U.S.N.T.S. Service School." Schatell, Norman (1943) Untitled. Unpublished. Veterans History Project: Library of Congress.

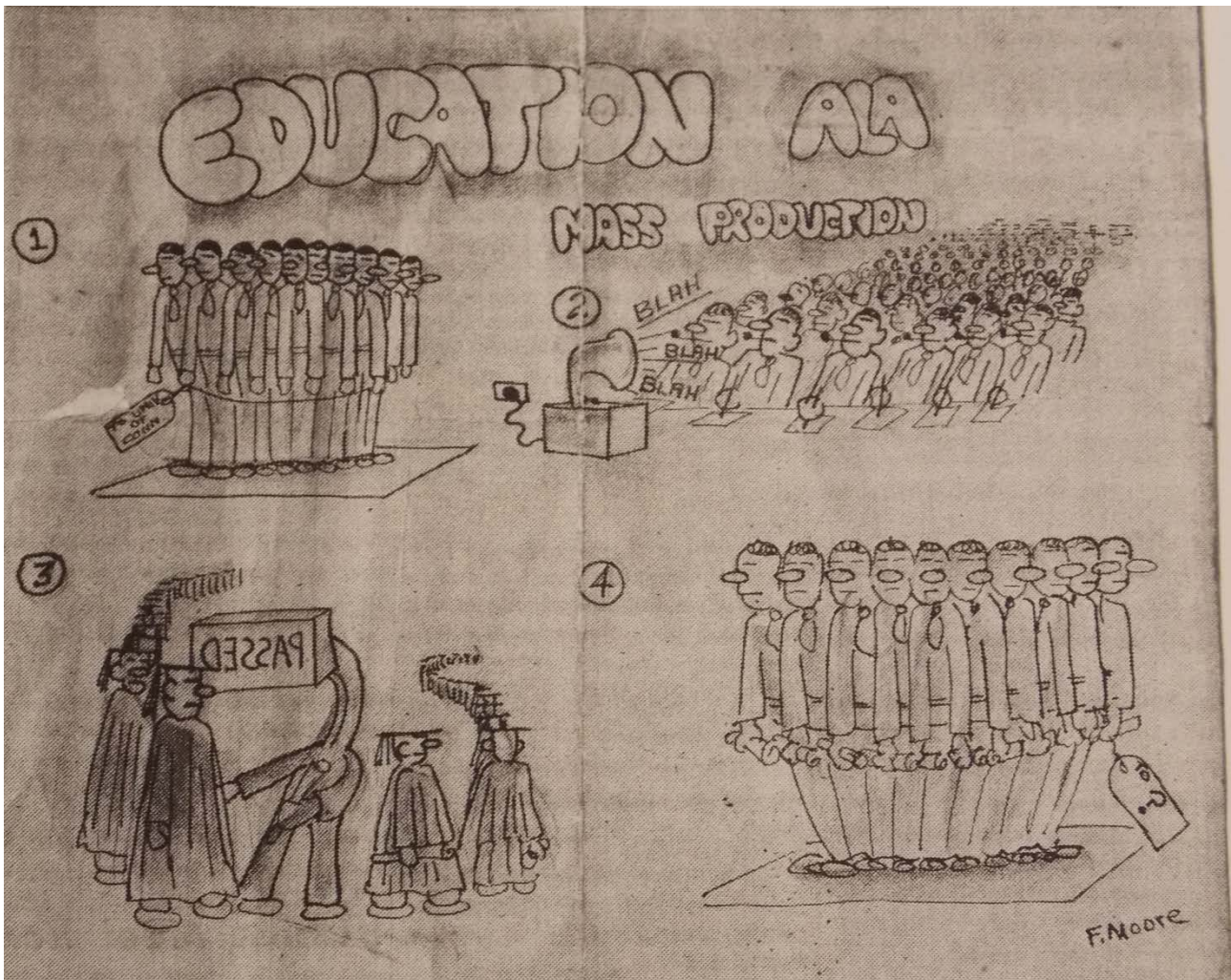


Figure 3.28. 'Education A La Mass Production'. Moore, Frank (undated). Veterans History Project: Library of Congress.

Figures 3.29-3.31 are taken from a comics diary account of the experiences of Philip Dean Gardner⁸⁹ during his service in the European theatre of conflict in the Second World War. Gardner provides a remarkable account of his daily experiences through the sequential illustrations contained in his diary. His comics also provide a first-hand account of his experiences in Italy, a theatre of conflict that receives almost no attention in commercially published Second World War era comics.

Despite the harsh realities and dangers of warfare and active service, the comics of Gardner provide first-hand evidence that American soldiers were fighting primarily in

⁸⁹ Philip Dean Gardner was born in Maine and lived in Washington. He served in the US Army between 1942 and 1945 as part of the 87th Infantry Regiment and the 10th Mountain Division in Italy.

defence of the grassroots elements of American life and not some greater, jingoistic or ideological cause (Hamilton, 2006, 13). Unlike in the commercially produced comics analysed previously, it is only in this regard that the heroic attribute of patriotism occurs in these amateur comics. In no instance do these soldier-illustrated productions exhibit overtly patriotic or democratic ideology by incorporating signs and icons such as the flag of the United States, the Capitol Building or the Statue of Liberty. Rather, these comics indicate a form of grassroots patriotism that is connected to the American way of life for the ordinary person and these soldiers as individuals pre-enlistment.

For example, Gardner illustrates the pleasures of indulging in grassroots patriotism by reading the hometown newspaper, drinking milkshakes and eating French fries. Such moments constitute respite from the war through reifying the personal connection of the individual with American life and culture via indulgence in material commodities that serve as surrogates for home. This reification is of such importance to Gardner as an individual that these are the moments he has chosen to record and remember on each of these days. They are, therefore, to be considered Gardner's most significant experience on each of these days and deserving of preservation against the evanescence of memory to aid the psychological survival of the individual. As Allan Winkler (1978) writes, there was a notable lack of interest among soldiers about the causes or politics of war. "Soldiers were interested in other things - home above all - as John Hersey learned in writing about the marines on Guadalcanal. They hungered for the simple things they remembered and longed to see once more" (Winkler, 1978, 156-7).

Though the comics of Moore and Gardner's are of a more sombre tone than that of Schatell, they also include further evidence of the tendency to use humour as coping mechanism, particularly in connection with the dangers faced on the front line and the authority and loss of individuality inherent in military life.

For example, figure 3.32 shows a soldier highly reminiscent of George Baker's *Sad Sack*, though arguably autobiographical, displaying an abundance of patches clearly marked with the number '17' and in the process of attempting to board an American troop ship. At the same time his superior is blocking his path and shouting "What's your number?!" despite it being clearly indicated by the numerous patches. The expression of Moore's frustration in creating the illustration is a further example of resistance to military authority. The 'numbered' soldier signifies the loss of individuality associated with military membership. The style of the illustration should be considered to indicate Moore's appreciation for and emulation of Baker's war comics.

Similarly, in figure 3.33, Gardner uses rhetorical humour as a method of disassociating from the dangers of front line combat. As his autobiographical character, overburdened with pack and gear, marches towards the rear lines, a sign pointing in the opposite direction reads "Front lines + Other nasty places." As detailed previously, such instances of humour constituted a means of reaction to, and the exertion of a form of limited control over, the dangerous realities of total war combat (Hünig, 2002, 27; Holman and Kelly, 2001, 262). As with the previous illustration by Moore (figure 6.12), Gardner's character is stylistically reminiscent of Baker's popular anti-hero, *Sad Sack*. This further demonstrated the affinity that soldiers felt with this type of 'hero' character as opposed to the superheroes and exaggerated 'real' heroes of other comics narratives.

Finally, the overburdening of Gardner's character is again indicative of military life as the implicit enemy. The pack, larger than the individual and carried by them through great individual exertion, can be decoded as metaphorically representing military life and institutions. While humour has been used to disassociate the individual from conflict with the actual enemy, as exhibited in the text of the sign, Gardner's soldier cannot unburden himself from military life, even when removed from the front line.

This argument is supported by Gardner's final contribution to his comics war diary (see figure 6.14). Subsequent to the armistice of August 14, 1945, (known as V-J Day), Gardner spends the following day cleaning and polishing his car, an activity he describes as "Mental reconversion". The necessity of this mental reconversion indicates the psychological affect that membership of the American Armed Forces has had on Gardner as an individual. The form of the activity itself is further indicative of reification with American culture and home front life.

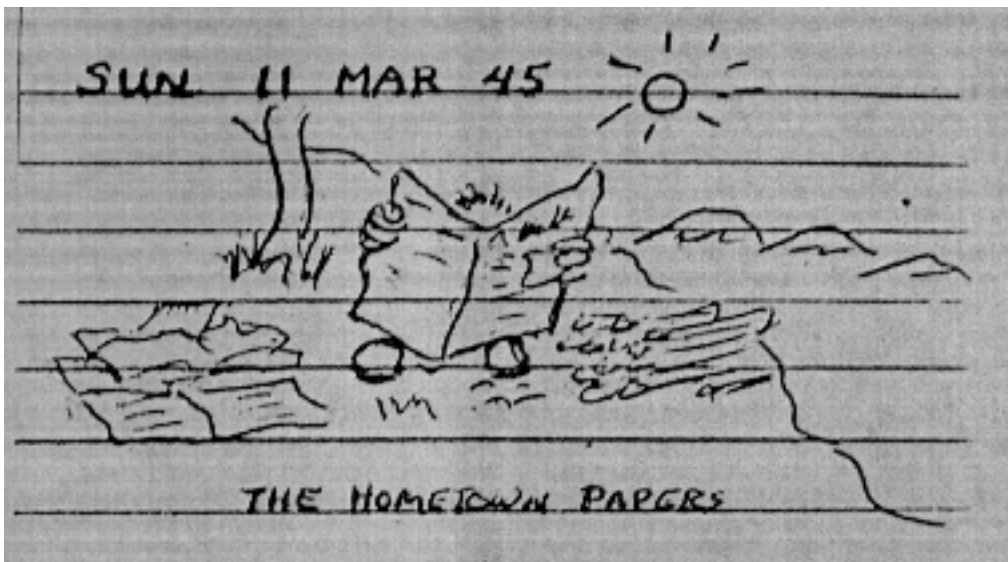


Figure 3.29. Gardner, Phillip Dean (1944-1945) Untitled comics diary. Unpublished. Veterans History Project: Library of Congress.

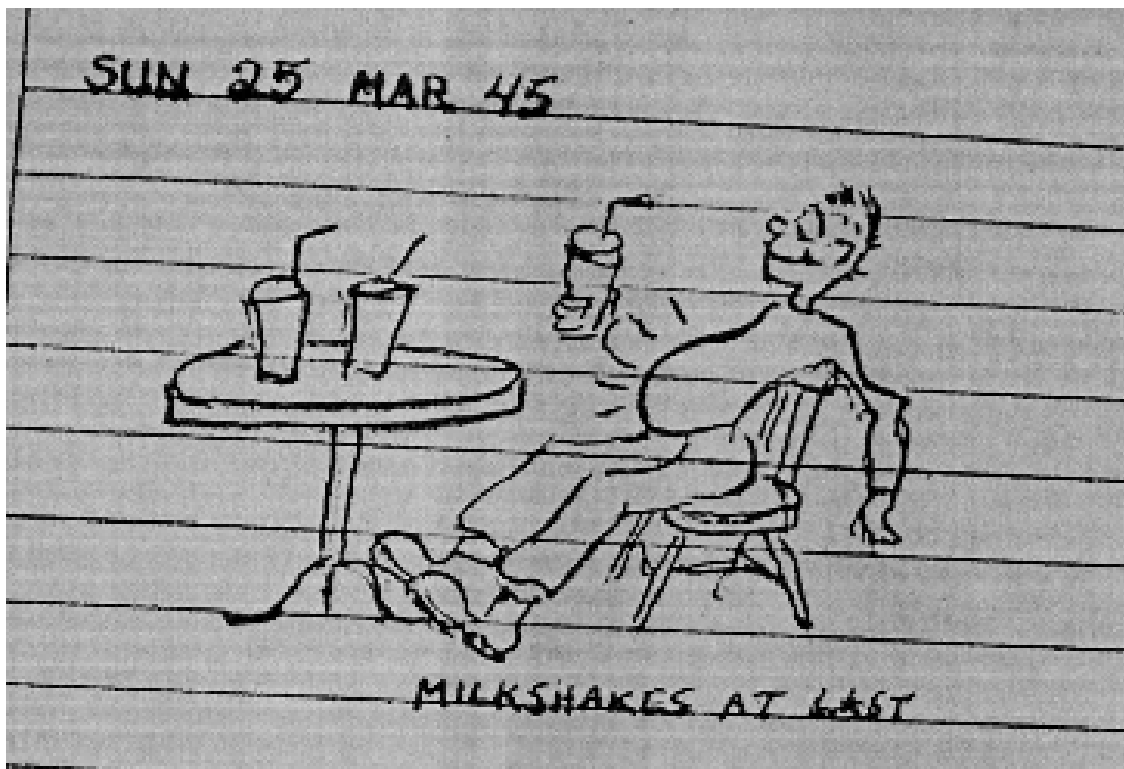


Figure 6.30. Gardner, Phillip Dean (1944-1945) Untitled comics diary. Unpublished. Veterans History Project: Library of Congress.

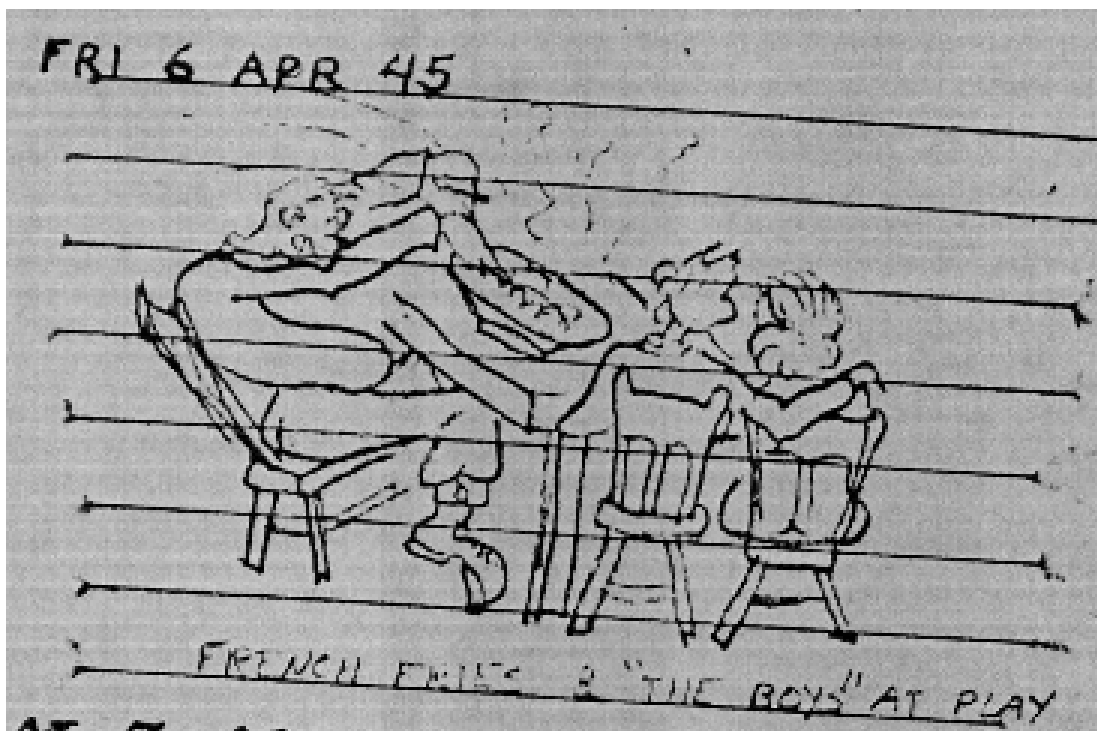


Figure 3.31. Gardner, Phillip Dean (1944-1945) Untitled comics diary. Unpublished. Veterans History Project: Library of Congress.

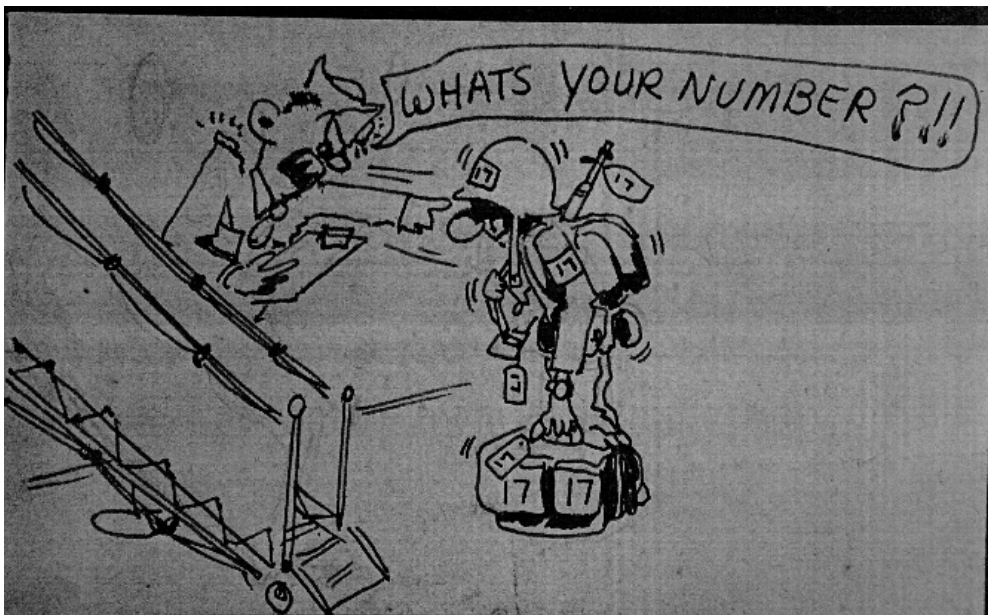


Figure 3.32. Moore, Frank (undated). Untitled. Unpublished. Veterans History Project: Library of Congress.



Figure 3.33. Gardner, Phillip Dean (1944-1945) Untitled comics diary. Unpublished. Veterans History Project: Library of Congress.

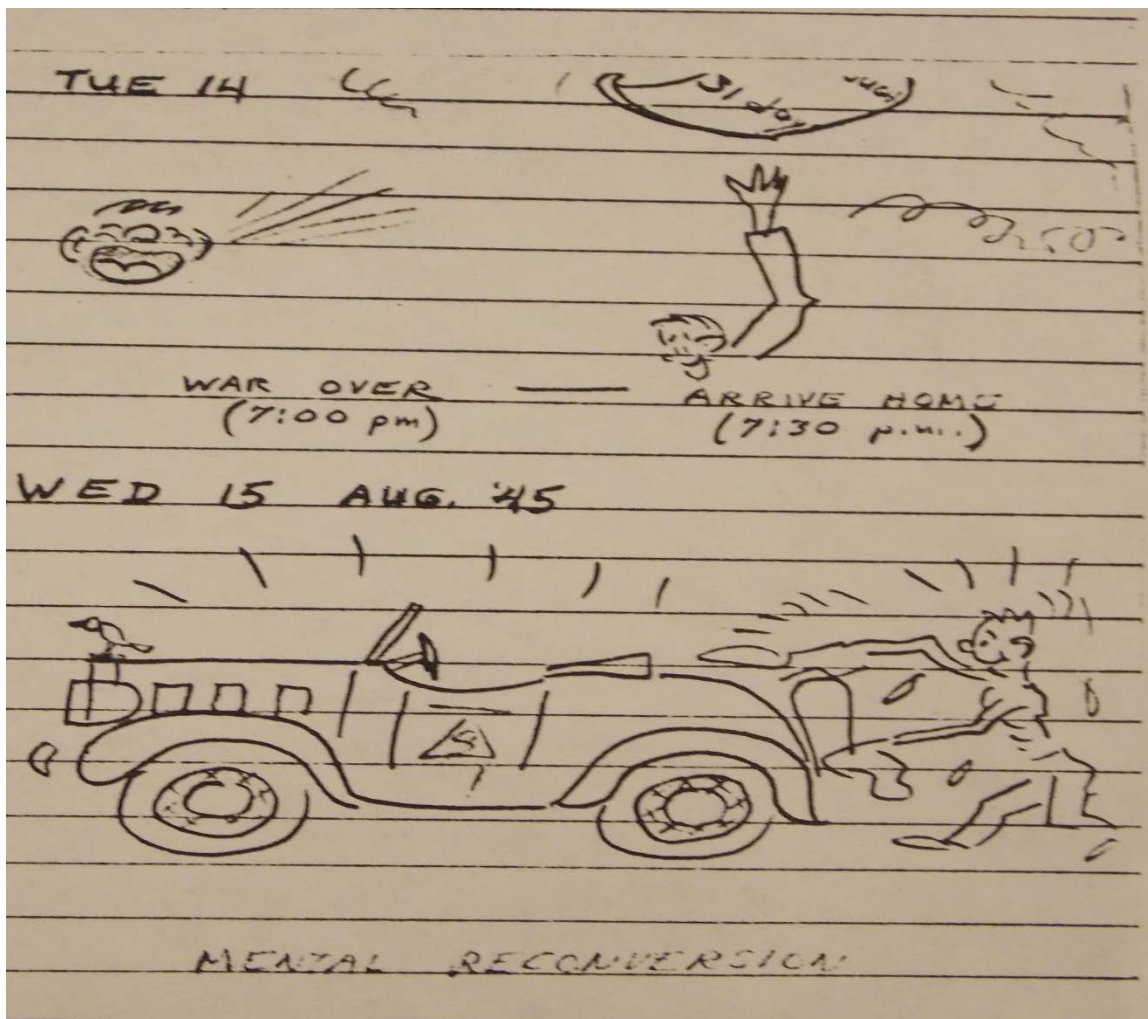


Figure 3.34. Gardner, Phillip Dean (1944-1945) Untitled comics diary. Unpublished. Veterans History Project: Library of Congress.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has categorised the hero figures in the selected sample of commercial American Second World War era comics according to the attributes they display. The three categories identified in this study are the political hero, the symbolic hero and the soldier hero. Each categorisation possesses particular attributes that frequently overlap though some, such as the acquisition of language, horsemanship and spectacular violence, are unique to one particular category. Bravery, loyalty and patriotism occur ubiquitously throughout the categories. The attribute of recklessness is an additional factor

in the depiction of foreign political heroes for consumption by an American audience. This implies that Parents' Magazine Press intended to show that America's domestic political heroes were prudent while those of other, allied nations were prepared to take risks in pursuit of victory. Only the soldier hero is shown to possess the quality of spectacular violence directed towards the enemy. This is necessitated by the conflict engendered in a total war situation in which soldier heroes exist in a mortal struggle with the enemy.

Evidence has also been presented to support the argument that cooperation between the various categories of the hero was communicated by these publications due to the necessity of cooperation within the context of total war. In the case of the symbolic hero, particularly where he is characterised as a superhero, this category is depicted in cooperation with the category of the soldier hero required to resolve the conflict in the relevant narrative. Further, foreign and domestic soldier heroes are shown in cooperation. However, where this occurs, the narrative gives greater weight to the heroism on the domestic, American soldier hero category than it does to its allied counterpart.

This chapter then concluded with an examination of a number of unpublished comics illustrated by the American soldiers during the Second World War and collected as part of the Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress. These artefacts show that the categories of the hero and enemy identified in previous chapters do not occur in the materials created by soldiers themselves. They do, however, indicate the profound effect that the comics medium had upon enlisted personnel as a discursive space in which they could express and record their experiences and their emotional reaction to them.

For example, soldier-illustrated comics served as an expressive outlet for their frustrations about military protocol and training and reveal a trend amongst trainees towards minor rebellion against military routine and authority. Comics, therefore, provide a discourse in which soldiers can express their reaction to the loss of individual identity catalysed by their membership of the military. As in the case of Moore's illustration

concerning the American victory at Okinawa, they also provide a personal space for discourse concerning ambiguous reactions to the events of military reality.

These comics present unique evidence that soldiers used humour as a coping mechanism to deal with their situation. Humour was demonstrated in a number of situations, including as a method of disassociating the individual from the dangers they faced during the war. In addition, these comics indicate that soldiers exhibited grief and anxiety at loss and the dangers faced by their colleagues. The historical artefacts analysed in this chapter have provided a rare insight into the emotional reactions of soldiers at the loss of a colleague and to the mortal realities of active service. The affinity with other soldiers that are, in some way, part of the same group provides evidence for the view that participation in the military catalyses in the individual an affinity for the imagined community (Anderson, 1991) formed by this establishment that reflects and encourages the heroic attribute of loyalty (Moss, 2011, 9).

Finally, the comics analysed in this chapter highlight the emotional importance of a soldier's connection with elements of American culture and pre-enlistment life. Due to the fact that icons of American life are limited to the material commodities that serve as surrogates for home, such as milkshakes and hometown newspapers, this indicates that soldiers' exhibited a form of grassroots patriotism rather than the ideological patriotism coded into commercial comics. Thus, having analysed the types of hero in Second World War era comics, the following chapter turns to an analysis of the enemy. It does so in order to demonstrate that the same sorts of characterisation of heroes apply to their antagonists, though with different nuanced attributes.

3. Types of Enemy in Second World War American Comics.

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that the same categories that characterise American Second World War heroes also apply to the enemies of the United States that were represented in the comics of the era, though with differing attributes. Whether these enemies were fictional symbols of the ideological enemies of the United States, depictions of enemy soldiers or representations of actual enemy leaders such as Hitler and Mussolini, these comics reveal a number of elements involved in the propaganda patterning of American popular culture. They also importantly reveal how villains were characterised in oppositional terms to the categories of heroism outlined in the previous chapter.

This chapter argues that there were three chronological stages in the development of enemy characterisation that occurred in these texts. First, before 1942, enemies in American comics consisted mostly of corrupt politicians and industrialists who wanted America to intervene in the war for their own purposes.⁹⁰ There are also numerous references to fascism and Nazi Germany during this period, often loosely disguised as fictional nations. Second, between 1942 and 1944, the enemies of the United States are almost exclusively shown as Japanese. This nationality is depicted as being brutal, deceitful and, ultimately, inhuman. The Japanese are also often depicted as a puppet state of the Nazis. On those occasions when the narrative focuses on the Nazis, they are characterised either as monsters or buffoons, depending on whether they are officers or common soldiers (Hirsch, 2014, 461. See Murray (2011) for a discussion of enemy officers characterised as sexually deviant sadists). In the sample analysed in this study, enemy leaders are often characterised as both monsters and buffoons. This phase is distinct from the former pre-1942 stage due to the fact that the enemies are clearly depicted as either

⁹⁰ For example, this was the case in the very first Superman narrative in *Action Comics #1* (1938).

Japanese or Nazi. Pre-1942, the influence of these ideological enemies was often implied, though the actual enemy was that of corruption from within. During the final stage, comics publishers accorded with the OWI and WWB's request to depict Germany in particular as "irredeemably evil and violent" and reinforce the argument that "unremitting violence was essential to creating a world in which democracy and tolerance could flourish" (ibid., 451). This third stage of characterisation occurred from late 1944 until the end of the war and coincided with the escalation of the war effort against enemy civilians (ibid.). It was, however, not clearly distinct from the previous stage and should, therefore, be thought of as a development of the 1942-1944 stage of enemy characterisation.

However, there was also a trend towards the lack of vilification of the enemy in soldier-illustrated narratives, arguably as a consequence of their collective affinity and limited resistance to dominant military authority. Within the Frank Moore collection at the Veterans History Project are fifteen individually illustrated panels that, when brought together, depict the adventures of a fictional Nazi U-boat in their encounter with American Navy forces (figures 4.1 – 4.3). This narrative reveals an unusual attitude towards the Nazi enemy. The fact that these panels are illustrated from the enemy's perspective is remarkable and reveals an empathy, albeit humorously constructed, between the artist and those whom he is fighting.⁹¹ What is more remarkable is that one of these panels (figure 4.2) illustrates the Nazi enemy resisting the temptation to fire upon a passenger vessel and thus commit a war crime. This indicates an affinity between combatants of all nations while at war, enemy or otherwise, and extends Anderson's (1991) notion of the imagined community to arguably encompass all combatants regardless of nation or antagonism. It also demonstrates a resistance to the propagandistic categorisation of the brutal enemy who has no regard for life or the rules of warfare. If this is indeed the case,

⁹¹ It is also interesting to note here that Moore served in the US Army during the subsequent Korean conflict and, during this time, began to experiment with styles of Oriental painting and Zen art.

then Moore demonstrates that combatants were not necessarily affected by the messages of hatred towards their opponents that were contained within and disseminated to them by popular culture. It is important to note here that there is no attempted dehumanisation of the enemy soldier in any of the soldier-illustrated comics in this sample. Rather, the enemy is the military itself or, rather, military authority, routing, and the loss of individuality associated with military membership.

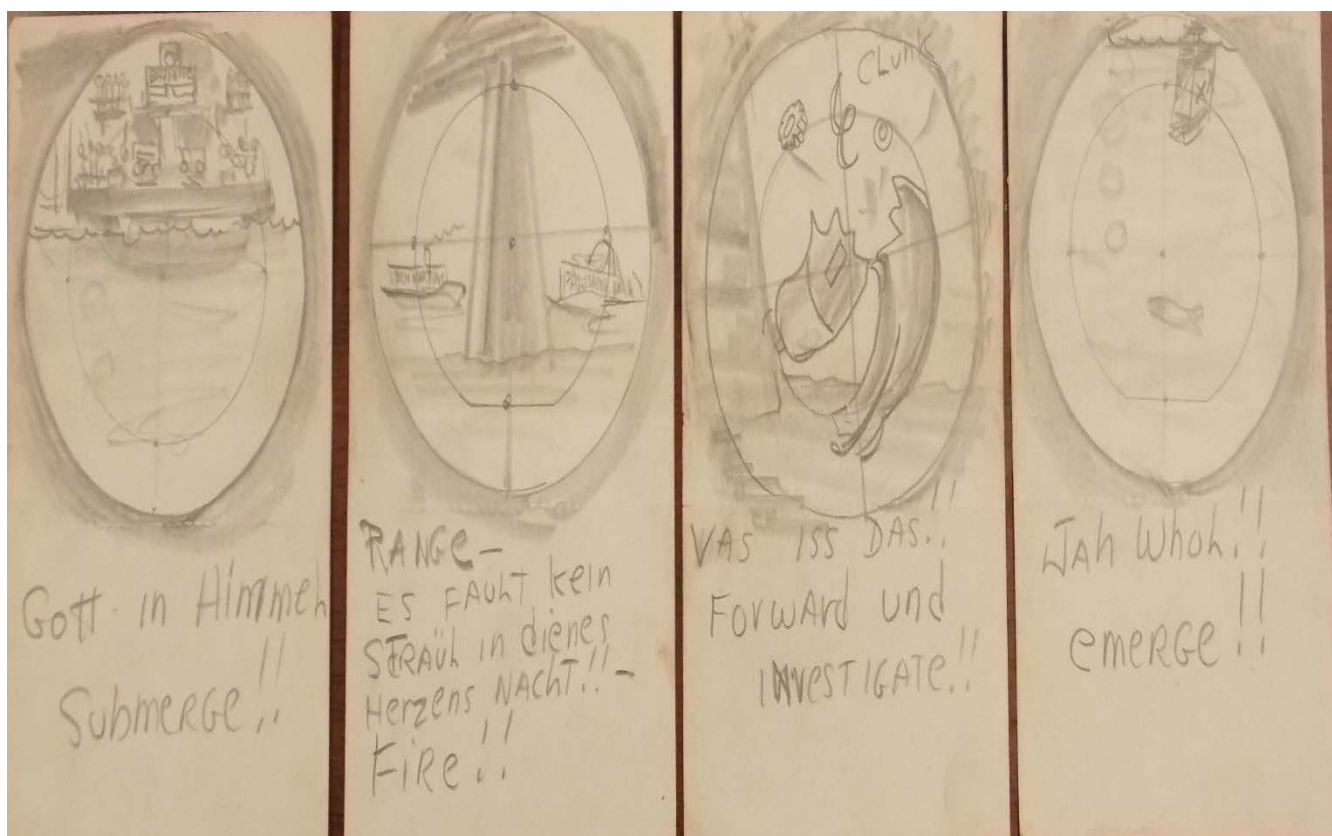


Figure 4.1. Moore, Frank (undated). Untitled. Unpublished. Four panels of a fifteen panel sequence depicting a Nazi U-Boat attack on American warships. Veterans History Project: Library of Congress.

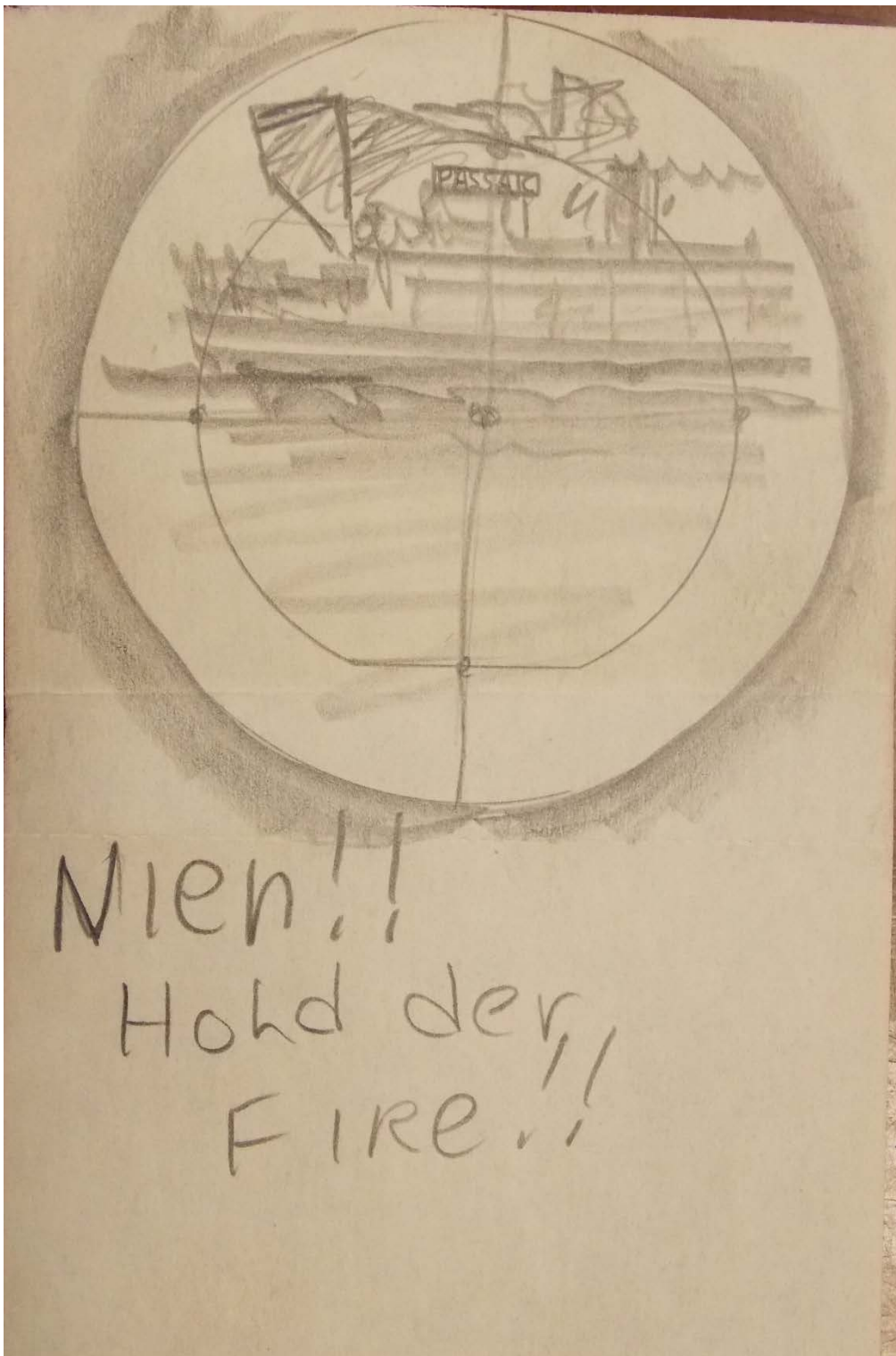


Figure 4.2. Moore, Frank (undated). Untitled. Unpublished. Panel twelve of a fifteen panel sequence depicting a Nazi U-Boat attack on American warships. Veterans History Project: Library of Congress.

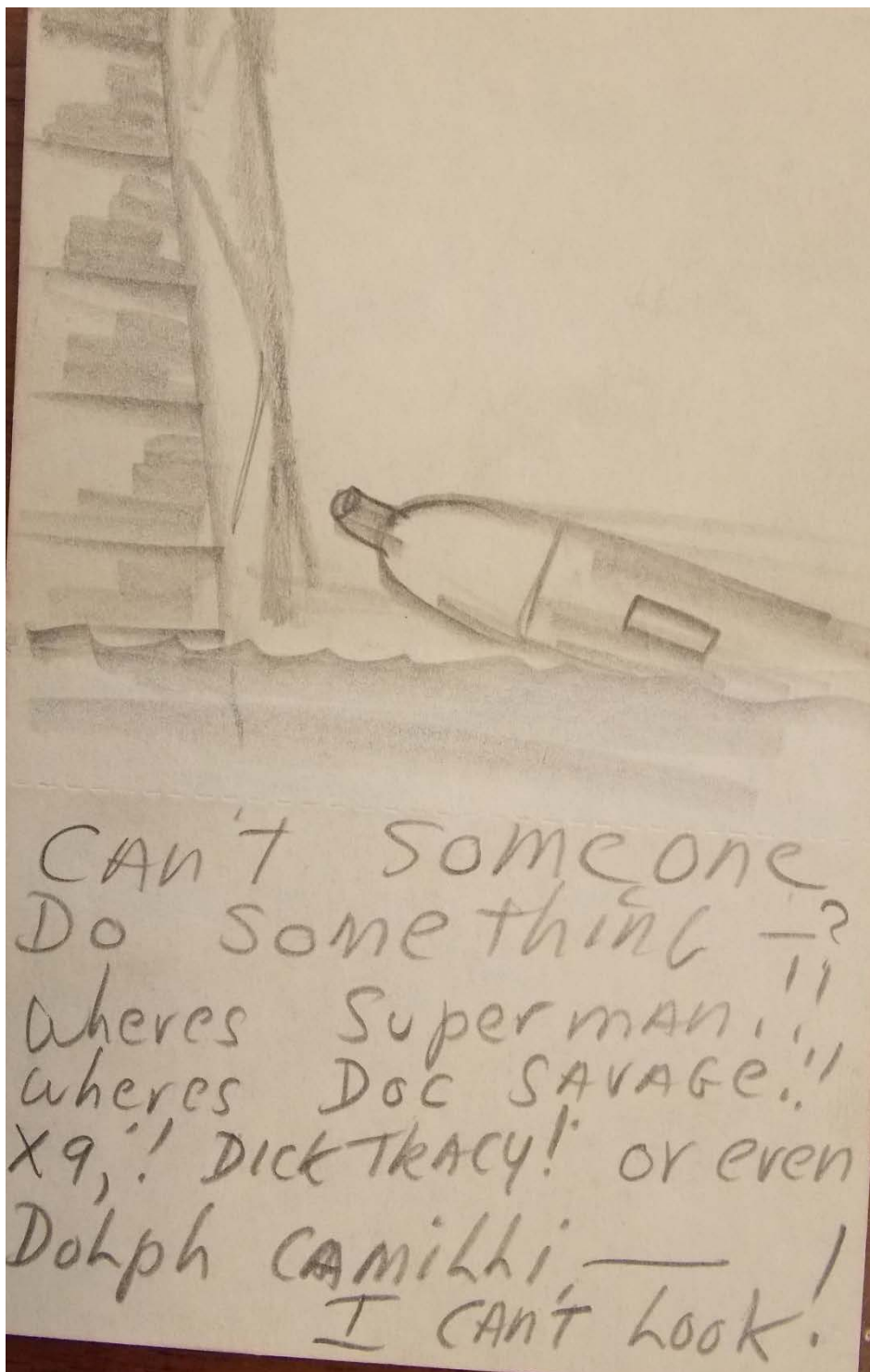


Figure 4.3. Moore, Frank (undated). Untitled. Unpublished. The final panel of a fifteen panel sequence depicting a Nazi U-Boat attack on American warships. Veterans History Project: Library of Congress.

Ideological enemies

With a cover date of December 1941, *Real Heroes #2* leads with an account of the life of J. Edgar Hoover and the formation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The date of publication shows that this comic was available to readers before the events of Pearl Harbor, while America still officially adopted a policy of neutrality about the war. Comics, however, were focused on Nazi Germany as the main ideological enemy.

On the final page of this narrative Hoover, in the role of political hero, is directly associated with the war effort. The text surrounding a large central illustration of the FBI chief reads: "Besides preventing crime, the F.B.I. has a big job to do in the present defense efforts of the U.S.A." The reader is informed in each panel that the FBI is tasked with the prevention of "arson ... / ... and sabotage. / Catch spies / ... check the history of vital defense workers / ... protect defense plans / ... check every accident for evidence of anti-American activities" (*Real Heroes #2*). This example demonstrates the initially defensive nature of American propaganda rhetoric. It also evokes elements of the American Dream by reinforcing the need for the defence of American property against arson and sabotage (Eco, 2004, 163; Cullen, 2003, 9; Slotkin, 1992, 297). The panel reading "catch spies" depicts three men, one of whom is an indistinct figure walking towards an airplane. In the forefront of the panel a man in a blue coat is handing another man a scrolled document and saying, "These are the plans the Fuehrer wants" (ibid.). This panel, therefore reveals the enemy as Nazi, ideologically opposed to US defence efforts, the American Dream and the rule of democratic law represented by the political hero, Hoover. It also implies that the US is rife with enemy espionage. It is pertinent to note here that in each of the panels illustrated on this page, with the exception of the central illustration of Hoover himself, there is at least one figure with their back to the reader. This visual device also adds to the defensive rhetoric of enemy espionage inherent in the wider

narrative by signifying that subterfuge and suspect characters are ubiquitous. The content of this publication is based upon pre-war American fears of the enemy within, in this case by spies and saboteurs intent upon the destruction of American property and ideology. This pre-war categorisation of the ideological enemy was to develop into an altogether more sinister and overtly propagandistic incarnation after Pearl Harbor in which the enemy, and the Japanese in particular, were categorized as ideologically-deviant infiltrators.

As previously discussed, one intrinsic aspect of the Nazi depiction of the villainous Jew was that of the infiltrator who has surreptitiously penetrated the homeland (Chalmers, 2011, 56). This same characterisation permeated American depictions of the ideological enemy and, as a reaction to the events of Pearl Harbor in particular, came to form part of the characterisation of the Japanese and, in turn, Japanese-Americans on the home front. *The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt* reminds the reader that “while Japanese envoys were talking “peace” in Washington, their bombers swooped down on Pearl Harbor” in an attack that is rhetorically described as “treacherous and unprovoked” (*The Life of Franklin D. Roosevelt*). Adjectives such as these formed part of the predominant rhetoric used to describe the actions of the Japanese throughout the war.

Many narratives also reflected the insecurity that dominated the discourse in the American press concerning Japanese-Americans living in the US (see figure 4.4). It is notable in this example that the phrase “often disguise themselves as natives of the country in which they are fighting” accompanied by the location of the characters in the panel implies that Japanese infiltrators were fighting inside America (*United States Marines #1*). This insecurity and mistrust of the Japanese-American community led to widespread persecution and the eventual internment of many of its members in military-run camps across the United States.⁹²

⁹² See, for example, Ng (2002).

At least one panel from *The United States Marines #1* (figure 4.4) implies that Japanese-Americans working in business are still ideological enemy in disguise. Comics such as this served to fuel the racial prejudices encountered by Americans of Japanese descent on the home front by depicting this group as 'other' to the majority of American citizens, characterising them as infiltrators and, therefore, categorising them as ideological enemies (Chalmers, 2011, 56). In this regard, the prejudices propagated by comics such as these contained clear indications as to where American hatred and fear should be directed during wartime (Doob, 1950, 440).

Near identical stereotyping occurs in the rhetoric of the comic 'How To Spot A Jap', by Milton Caniff (1942), author of the famous comic strip *Terry and the Pirates* (see figures 4.5 and 4.6). 'How To Spot A Jap' was commissioned by the United States Army for inclusion in the army training manual, *Pocket Guide To China* (1942) and was designed to help American service personnel distinguish between their Chinese allies and the Japanese enemy. The use of Caniff's popular characters, Terry Lee and Pat Ryan, was specifically sought by the American military due to the fact that the comic's narrative took place in China. This was considered to lend verisimilitude to their cultural knowledge. The characters were also very popular with members of the American military and appeared in a number of pull-out comics sections supplied without cost to US army publications. Though 'How To Spot A Jap' was removed from subsequent editions of the *Pocket Guide To China*, this publication further highlights the recurrent propaganda patterning that characterizes the Japanese enemy as devious infiltrators, trying to pose as natives of "whatever country they're in" and not to be trusted even after "pretending to surrender" (Caniff, 1942, 75). However, figures 4.5 and 4.6 also suggest that racial identity is, to a certain extent, performative. "The Jap shuffles (but he may be clever enough to fake the stride)" (ibid.). This performative element presents a problem for race-based propaganda and yet is also the justification for categorising the enemy as a potential infiltrator. This

publication was also designed to facilitate the disambiguation of the Chinese as allies of the United States and it points to a tension within the wider propaganda of the period (see further, Murray, 2011). During wartime, propaganda also needs to specify a nation's allies in contradistinction to the 'othered' enemy, as discussed earlier. Due to their visual and rhetorical elements, comics were entirely well suited to this purpose.

Post-1944, this categorisation of the ideological enemy as infiltrator is incorporated into a justification for unremittent war against Germany and, in particular, Japan. For example, *American Air Forces #2* (November-December 1942) narrates the development of the American Task Force 58, also called the First Carrier Task Force, an unprecedented flotilla that allowed bombing raids to target major cities in Japan. The final panel illustrates American planes and warships on a direct course towards the Japanese city of Tokyo. The text reads "The once insurmountable distances that protected Japan have been overcome, now within striking distance of our forces, she will be repaid in kind for her treacherous attack of Pearl Harbor!" (*American Air Forces #2*, 1944, 34).



Figure 4.4. "Japs Often Disguise Themselves As Natives Of The Country In Which They Are Fighting". *The United States Marines #1* (Magazine Enterprises, 1943).

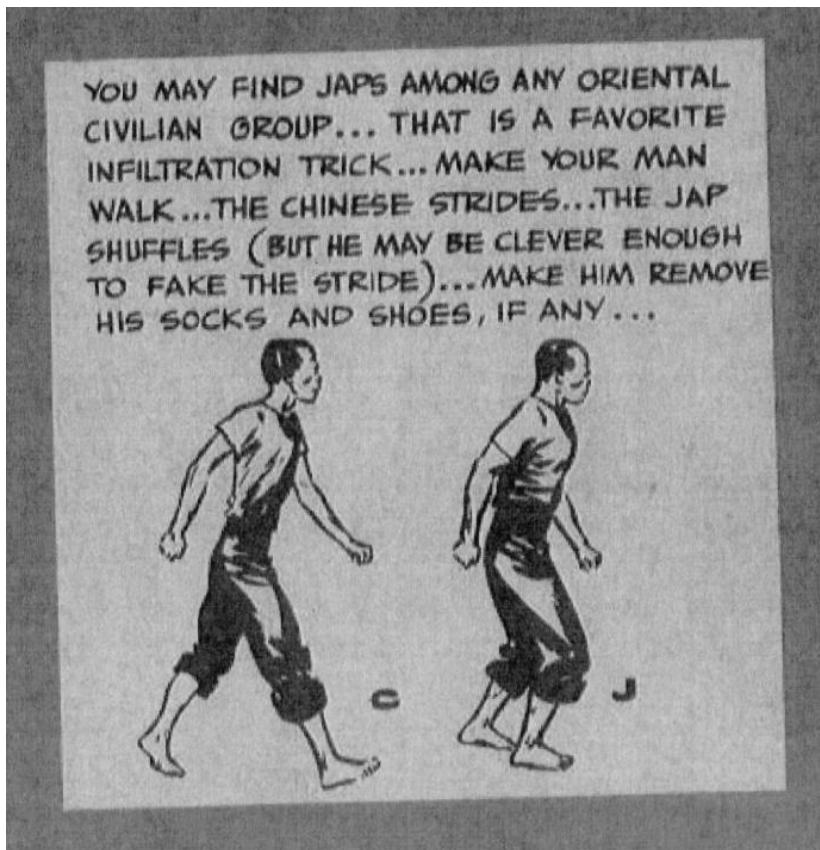


Figure 4.5. "You May Find Japs Among Any Oriental Civilian Group". Caniff, Milton (1942) 'How To Spot A Jap'. In: *Pocket Guide To China*



Figure 4.6. "Remember That Jap Spies Have Fooled Even The Chinese". Caniff, Milton (1942) 'How To Spot A Jap'. In: *Pocket Guide To China*

Enemy Leaders

This section argues that American Second World War comics characterised the leaders of enemy nations either as monsters or ridiculed them as buffoons (Hirsch, 2014). In contrast to depictions of political heroes, enemy leaders are represented as weak, selfish and cowardly, whose abuse of power will ultimately result in the destruction of themselves and their nations. Enemy leaders were often illustrated as representatives of enemy nations or used as a generic term for the military enemy. For example, throughout *The United States Marines* there are numerous instances of the Japanese enemy simply being referred to as 'Tojo' connection to Hideki Tojo, General of the Imperial Army and 40th Prime Minister of Japan. After 1944, this practice occurred less frequently at the behest of the OWI who requested that the narrative focus for hatred be placed instead on the populace of enemy countries to justify the allied escalation of violence against civilians of enemy nations (ibid.).

In *Uncle Sam Quarterly* # 1 (1941), the American public are shown in open revolt against the corrupt Senator Bristol's child conscription bill and describe him variously as "traitor", "rat" and "dictator". These rhetorical devices are important as they align Bristol with Adolf Hitler and other totalitarian enemy leaders in opposition to American democracy. They also connect the villain with disease carrying vermin that are frequently exterminated by humans for the preservation of health and food supplies. In this publication, the false President put in place by Senator Bristol, arguably a further instance of the ideological enemy as infiltrator, is illustrated with a demon-like face whose talon-like fingers are reaching around America and who is looking on in glee as a procession of American children march in file towards his mouth. In this way the enemy leader is dehumanised using grotesque horror imagery and comes to be hated and feared by the reader in a similar fashion to "satanic demons and the bogeyman of fairy tales and horror films"

(Murray, 2011, 189). This association further encourages the extermination of the enemy in pursuit of justified self-preservation and defence. In this instance the dehumanizing association is not with vermin but with monsters, thereby implying a messianic quest narrative of good versus evil structured upon mythical terms and imagery.

The lead story of *Uncle Sam Quarterly* #4 (1942) is not directly attributed to any identifiable author. It is entitled 'Uncle Sam and the Mongrol Man', a dehumanizing rhetorical pun on the connotations of the terms 'mongoloid', 'mongrel', and 'Mongol'. The term 'mongoloid' derives from the work on racial theory of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach who, in 1779, argued that there were five races of human beings. These were Caucasian, Mongoloid, Malay, Negroid and American. Eisner incorporated notions of race and racial theory into his narrative in order to satirise the race-based ideology of superiority propagated by the Nazis. This story presents all three major axis leaders as characters within the narrative as opposed to an implied proxy. The feature opens with Hitler directly addressing the world (and the reader) from a balcony draped with a large swastika and vowing to "let loose der *Mongrol Men*!" (*Uncle Sam Quarterly* # 4, 1942. See figure 4.7). The third panel shows the reaction of the American public to this threat who ridicule the dictator as "that lame brain" and "beast man," both of which tie together the previously mentioned double entendre inherent in the phrase mongrol (ibid.).



Figure 4.7. Three panel sequence ridiculing Hitler. *Uncle Sam Quarterly* # 4 (Quality Comics, 1942).

In this narrative, the action is based upon the selective breeding of inhuman monsters. The irony of this plot would certainly not have been lost on American readers familiar with Nazi propaganda about the Aryan 'master race'. This breeding process results in the production of three monstrous creatures who, nevertheless, are strongly reminiscent of the buck-toothed, slope-browed image of the Japanese enemy prolific throughout American propaganda. Due to the machinations of a mad scientist, a mongrol man is delivered to each of the leaders of the Axis powers. It is pertinent to note the iconography and rhetoric at play within this sequence (see figure 4.8). Hitler, whose ego and desire for control is often mocked within Allied propaganda, is instructed that his mongrol man will "obey all your commands" (ibid.). This Golem-like obedience is ironic. The notion of a man-made monster that mindlessly obeys the commands of its master arguably derives from the Golem in Jewish mythology. Eisner was Jewish and may have incorporated this reference for satirical purposes in order to further ridicule the racist ideology of Hitler and Nazi Germany. In contrast to the bravery of Allied political heroes, Hitler is illustrated hiding from the mongrol man behind a throne-like chair. In Rome, the mongrol man and Mussolini are rendered in silhouette, symbolically aligning the physiognomy of both entities (ibid.). Further, the silhouetted representation signifies that the Italian fascists were to be considered as a backdrop to the greater threats from the Nazis and the Japanese. Mussolini's humorous statement, "Atsa wot we need!" propagates the view that, unlike the soldier heroes of the Americans and Allies, the Italian armed forces were lacking in conviction, strength and courage (ibid.). In Tokyo, Hirohito exclaims that the mongrol man "is indeed the perfect symbol of the new Asiatic order" (ibid.). As such, this one panel exhibits the idea that the Japanese race aspire to be inhuman monsters.⁹³ These three panels reveal the myriad levels of propaganda that can be communicated by a seemingly

⁹³ For more on this see the following section.

innocuous comics sequence to succinctly satirise the leaders of enemy nations (Chalmers, 2011).



Figure 4.8. Three panel sequence ridiculing Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo. *Uncle Sam Quarterly* # 4 (Quality Comics, 1942).

In the same issue of *Uncle Sam Quarterly*, a later story entitled 'Uncle Sam and Pootzie the Spy' sets out to ridicule Hitler and Göring as buffoons. As the two enemy leaders pace Hitler's office an Allied propaganda leaflet blows through the window and onto the Führer's face (see figure 4.9). The Nazi leader reacts to this in a ridiculous manner, swearing and throwing a tantrum in a juvenile fashion. Hitler and Göring proceed to read the leaflet and discover it to contain a large image of America's symbolic hero, Uncle Sam, along with the legend, deriving from Flagg's iconic poster of the First World War, "Uncle Sam wants you to smash the Axis".

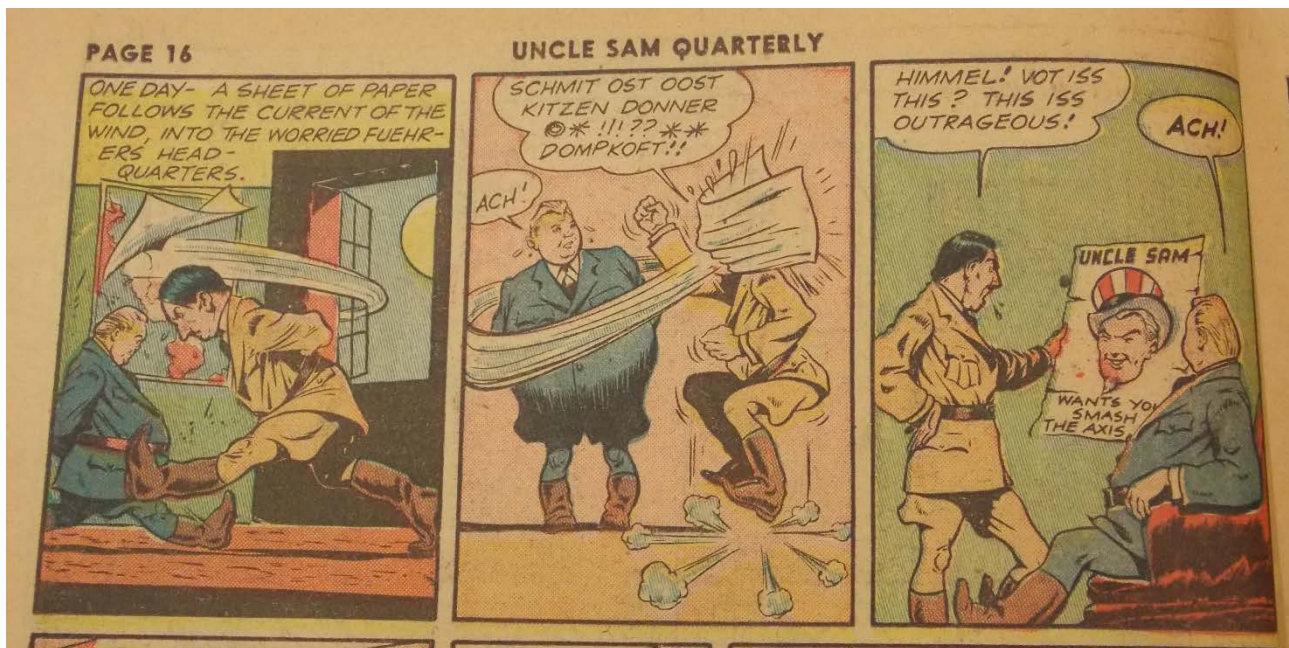


Figure 4.9. Three panel sequence ridiculing Hitler and Göring. *Uncle Sam Quarterly* # 4 (Quality Comics, 1942).

Tantrums such as these constitute a recurrent characterisation of Hitler within *Uncle Sam Quarterly*, ridiculing the enemy leader and categorising him as a buffoon. Figure 5.7 shows another three panel sequence from *Uncle Sam Quarterly* #4. Within the first panel are indicators as to Hitler's intention of world domination in his location beside a large globe and his ideas of the racial superiority of the Nazi 'master race'. His frustration at not being able to defeat Uncle Sam and the American people is exhibited in the second panel wherein he is again illustrated in a paroxysm of rage. The final panel illustrates Hitler in an emasculated pose, leaning overly far forward, palms upturned as though in submission and pleading with the excessively obese Göring to find a solution to this problem by providing new inventions "dot vill crush mine enemies" (*Uncle Sam Quarterly* #4, 1942, 16). These physical exaggerations of Hitler's lack of masculinity and Göring's obesity ridicule these enemy leaders, identifying them as buffoons. The contrast in their physical attributes and the body language of their interaction contains connotations of the comedy duo of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy befitting the slapstick way these enemy leaders are characterised.

Göring's solution to the problem of Nazi lack of invention is to steal American inventions. As such, the narrative implies the superiority of American inventiveness. The use of Anglicized, pseudo-Germanic speech was yet another popular method of characterizing the enemy as buffoons, though this was not limited solely to enemy leaders but was applied to all types of Nazi enemy. This device was also used to ridicule the Japanese enemy, altered into the form of pseudo-Japanese (see previous figure 4.4).



Figure 4.10. "Why Haven't We A Man Like That??" Three panel sequence ridiculing Hitler and Göring. *Uncle Sam Quarterly* # 4 (Quality Comics, 1942).

After 1944, the characterisation of Nazi and Japanese leaders changed and comics increased their focus on the enemy soldiers of these nations. Whenever enemy leaders are mentioned after this period (in the sample of comics analysed in this study), direct reference is made to the inevitable futility of their war effort. For example, *The American Air Forces* #2 gives an account of the Nazi *Vergeltungswaffe 2* (V-2) rocket that contains the phrase "this sinister instrument came too late to save Adolf Hitler's lost cause in Europe" (*American Air Forces* #2, 1944). However, the same narrative also contains an indication that the German nation will use the weapon in the "next war" and that "it is only wishful thinking to expect the world has seen the last of this dreadful messenger of doom" (ibid.). This message is repeated in *American Air Forces* #3 in which a speculative

narrative about Allied methods of keeping post-war peace by deploying a substantial air force posits the example of a disarmed Germany “secretly and illegally engaged in the manufacture of improved 88-milimeter anti-aircraft guns” (*American Air Forces* #3, 1945). This comic contains no direct reference to Hitler or other Nazi enemy leaders and there is only one direct reference to Hirohito that signifies the futility of the Japanese war effort. “To Hirohito: These same tactics used so successfully in the battle of Europe, in addition to the B29 superfortresses will eventually seal your doom and exact retribution a thousandfold for your cruel and wanton attack on Pearl Harbor! Signed, the A.A.F” (*American Air Forces* #3, 1945, 18).

Enemy Soldiers

The third category analysed in this chapter is that of the enemy soldier, defined as the military forces of enemy nations and the way in which comics characterised them according to various stereotypes. This section builds from previous evidence that comics initially identified the ideological enemies of America while the nation was still officially neutral and demonstrates their use of this to justify an increase in American military development, arguing a need for defence against an enemy under the influence of opposing and corrupt ideology. From 1942 until the end of the war, comics focused on the military forces of Nazi Germany and Japan, giving almost no attention to Italian forces.⁹⁴ In both cases, enemy soldiers were de-individualized by the methods of illustration used to represent them. They were also characterised as inferior to American soldier heroes in every regard and in terms evocative of vermin. This was particularly the case in

⁹⁴ Where reference to Italy did occur it was, for the most part, focused on Mussolini as the enemy leader representative of this nation.

representations of the Japanese. After 1944, the comics in this sample increased the frequency with which they recounted narratives of individual Americans killing large numbers of Japanese enemies while constructing these accounts in terms of bravery, violence and patriotism that characterize the soldier hero.

In *U.S.A. Is Ready* (1941), the enemy presented are German and Italian. However, reference to the latter only occurs in a single reference to the “thinning legions of Il Duce” (*U.S.A. Is Ready*, 1941). Parallels are immediately drawn on the opening page between the might of the Nazi army and the strength of the US armed forces. The introductory narrative on the opening page of the publication is entitled “Blitzkrieg: The American Way” and is immediately followed by an illustration of an American tank sergeant entitled “U.S. Army’s “Panzer” Man” (ibid.). This highlights an important cultural aspect of propaganda comics in that they were widely used to contextualize and, indeed, Americanise many aspects of the war for US audiences. Though the German and Italian enemy are represented as ideological enemies according to the categories defined in this study, this comic uses their belligerence as a justification for increased American military development in rhetorical terms of defence contemporaneous to the Selective Training and Service Act (1940) and the extension of its provisions for conscription (August, 1941) preceding the US declaration of war (December, 1941). The publication is scattered with phrases reinforcing the wider defensive narrative and the idea that Germany will ultimately be the primary military enemy of the United States. This pattern in comics was to change, however, after Pearl Harbor.

The United States Marines focuses almost exclusively on the Japanese as the primary military enemy of the United States. These publications narrate, for the most part, dramatizations of actual battles and events in the Pacific theatre of conflict. Throughout the narratives, efforts are made to individualise the Marines by illustrating them with different facial and physical attributes, naming them and, occasionally, referring to real-life

military figures that were involved in the event. However, this is not the case with depictions of enemy soldiers who are conversely de-individualised through lack of naming and identical facial and physical features. This de-individualisation constitutes a form of dehumanization and is a component part of characterising the enemy soldier as culturally, racially and physically inferior to the soldier hero. Coupled with this is the frequent assertion that the American forces suffer considerably fewer casualties than their enemies. This is often stated in a terse and direct fashion that adds a semblance of factuality or verisimilitude to the claim (see figure 4.11).

The implication that American soldier heroes are capable of overcoming superior numbers of enemy soldiers occurs throughout these publications in a variety of nuanced ways. For example, the cover of *The United States Marines* (1943), signed by Mart Bailey, shows a single Marine charging at a Japanese machine-gun post armed with a knife and the butt of his rifle. He has graphically cut the throat of one of his opponents, dispatched a further three and startled the remaining two (see figure 4.12). Occasionally, the insistence that Japanese enemy soldiers are feeble in comparison to American soldiers is blatantly stated: "From a practical viewpoint, it demonstrated the comparative weakness of the Japanese as an individual fighter" (*Uncle Sam Quarterly* #4, 1942, 53). This point might also manifest in rhetorical form, signifying the incompetence of the enemy: "Suddenly two Japanese scout planes blunder through the clouds" (*The United States Marines* #1, 1943, 52). The inferiority of the Japanese forms the basis of frequent jokes at the expense of enemy soldiers such as the word-play in figure 4.13.



Figure 4.11. "The Japs Lost Over 800 Men, Of Whom Only Nine Were Taken Prisoner". *The United States Marines* #1 (Magazine Enterprises, 1943)

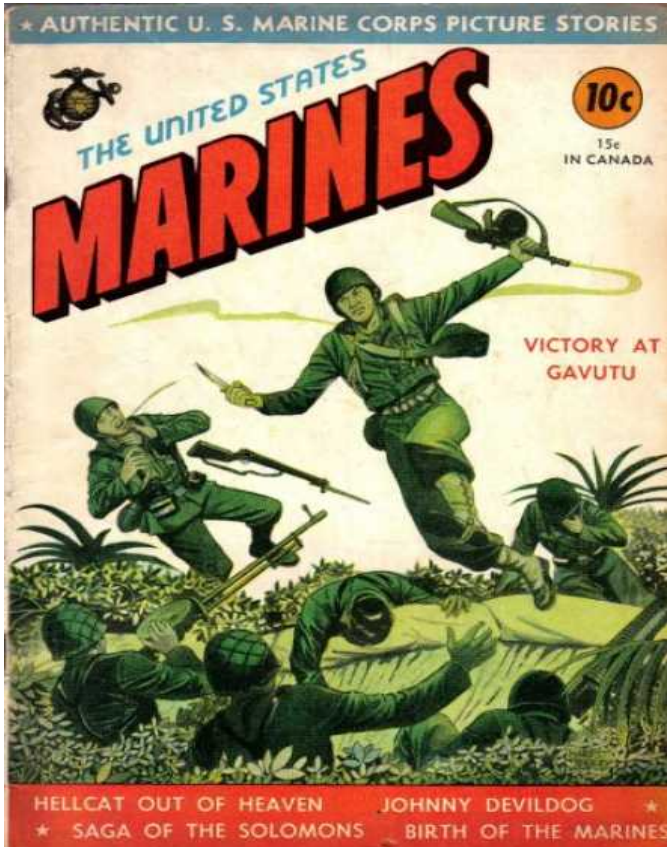


Figure 4.12. *The United States Marines* #1 (Magazine Enterprises, 1943).

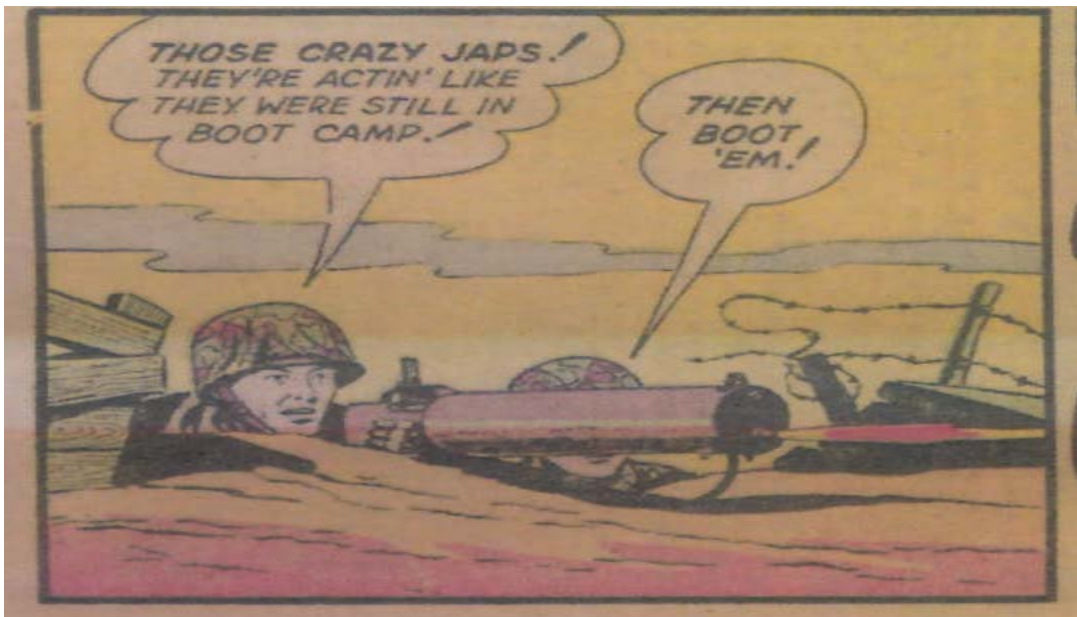


Figure 4.13. “Those Crazy Japs! They’re Actin’ Like They Were Still In Boot Camp!”. *The United States Marines* #3 (Magazine Enterprises, 1944)

The insinuation that the Japanese enemy soldier was physically inferior to the American soldier hero was connected with the assertion that they were also morally inferior. At the beginning of American involvement in the conflict, this was frequently stated in connection to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Throughout the duration of the war it became an effectively universal characterisation of the Japanese enemy soldier. For example, the Japanese not only demonstrated underhanded methods of warfare in attacking Pearl Harbor and Wake Island without warning and invading China (1937), they deliberately “pick easy targets” (*The United States Marines* #1, 1943, 52) and shirk “when the battle is met on terms approaching equality” (*Uncle Sam Quarterly* #4, 1942, 19). The invasion of China began the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937 – 1945) and was frequently referred to in the comics in this study as an indication of the Japanese penchant for undeclared hostilities against other nations. A further example of this occurs in the final panel of ‘The Ant Men’ (*Uncle Sam Quarterly* #3). Here Uncle Sam is illustrated in close-up, winking at the reader, addressing them directly and giving the ‘V for victory’ sign with his right hand. In this direct address to the reader, Uncle Sam remarks that miniaturizing

themselves and surreptitiously invading the United States (the premise that forms the basis of the narrative) “was just like the Japs... They can’t fight openly... but they’re going to find Uncle Sam a bit too tough to crack, eh fellas?” (*Uncle Sam Quarterly* # 3, 1942).

As well as the assertion that enemy soldiers were physically and morally inferior to American soldier heroes, comics of the period also characterised them as culturally inferior in a number of ways. One caricature-based and, essentially, racist anti-Japanese narrative occurs in *The United States Marines* #1 (1943), targeted at ridiculing the customs of enemy soldiers. The slapstick story ‘The Slap-Happy Japs’ lampoons cultural differences between the US and Japan that have been exaggerated beyond the point of absurdity. Here humour is being discursively used to encourage ideological group cohesion and solidarity amongst American military readers (Du Pont, 2015, 111-112; van Dijk, 2006; 115; Holman and Kelley, 2001, 262). However, there are also a number of other, more sinister, recurring cultural associations.

Werner Gruhl writes: “For the Imperial soldiers, surrender was not an option, so rather than be captured their last bullet or grenade was saved for suicide. Japanese officers often committed time-honored *seppuku* ritual suicide by slitting open their bellies” (Gruhl, 2013, 63). This practice was often incorrectly referred to within the comics in this sample as ‘Hari-kari’. When it is mentioned, it is done so in a way that misconstrues the cultural and moral heritage of the practice. Gruhl continues: “the ultimate disgrace to one’s self and family was to be taken captive. Suicide was preferable to capture, and often officers atoned for failure by *seppuku* (ritual suicide). Death was to be sublime like the fall of the cherry blossom: among flowers, the cherry blossom; among men, the samurai” (Gruhl, 2013, 189). Within comics such as *The United States Marines*, the practice of suicide as an alternative to surrender (whether or not it takes the form of ritual *seppuku*) is reframed as either a monstrous barbarism, cowardice, or symbolic of the eventual extermination of the Japanese race by their American opponents (see figure 4.14). It was

also fixated upon in photographs and illustrations (see figure 4.15). Intended both as comedy and to dehumanize, the derogatory characterisation of the Japanese as “crazy critters” in the final panel of figure 4.14 likens the Japanese committing *seppuku* to the misconception that lemmings deliberately leap to their deaths from cliffs in order to commit mass suicide when, in fact, this is a result of conditions in their migratory behaviour. The phrase is also part of American popular slang that further aids the identification of the US reader with the soldier-hero character.



Figure 4.14. “Crazy Critters!”. *The United States Marines #1* (Magazine Enterprises, 1943).



Figure 4.15. Photograph of Japanese soldiers after committing *seppuku*. *The United States Marines #2* (Magazine Enterprises, 1944).

The photograph above (figure 4.15) formed the basis of a later illustration of similar events that was published in *the United States Marines #3* (1944). The later illustration also involved two Japanese soldiers having committed *seppuku*, one of whom applied the required trigger-pressure with his toes. In the illustration, however, the focus is fixed upon the exact moment of death as the rifle bullet passes through the Japanese soldier's head (see previous chapter). It has been postulated that the propagation of this interpretation of the Japanese enemy encouraged their dehumanization and categorisation as vermin by their opponents. For example, John Chalmers has speculated that:

the Japanese were supposedly a barbaric people bent on conquest and with no regard for human life, including their own. The kamikaze (suicide) attacks of 1944-45 reinforced this view as did the fact that Japanese soldiers seldom surrendered. It is likely that the widespread view of the Japanese as vermin made it easier to unleash nuclear destruction in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 (Chambers, 1999, 249).

Instances of the Japanese and Nazi enemy being referred to as vermin, even within the sample of comics in this study, are too numerous to detail exhaustively. Bucktoothed, rodent-like Japanese and “Ratzies” are commonplace aspects of Second World War era narratives, especially in comics. Frequently, enemy soldiers are described as ‘swarms’ or as a “screaming horde” (*Uncle Sam Quarterly* # 2, 1941, 7). Phrases such as these possess connotations of barbarous legions and, most importantly, swarms of vermin such as locusts or rats. Within a single story in *Uncle Sam Quarterly* #3 (1942), the Japanese are referred to as ants, termites, rats, flies, cockroaches and midgets (*Uncle Sam Quarterly* #3, 1942).

Before Pearl Harbor, the Nazi soldiers were loosely disguised as being of an indistinct or unidentified nationality. The main indication that they were, in fact, Nazis occurred in the mock-Teutonic patterns of speech. This constituted not only an indication of identity but was also used as a form of ridicule, a pattern that would continue to be used to characterise Nazi enemy soldiers throughout the duration of the conflict. Another frequent pre-war indication that Germany constituted the primary enemy in many comics narratives were references to totalitarian dictatorships, Hitler’s title as ‘Führer’, or its translation as the term ‘leader’. “Ha! Look at dem. Der U.S.A. falls to der leader!” (*Uncle Sam Quarterly* #2, 1941). After Pearl Harbor, depictions of the Nazi soldier occurred predominantly within the categories of the buffoon or the bloodthirsty criminal as identified by Hirsch (2014), dependent upon whether they were a member of the Nazi party or an average soldier (Hirsch, 2014, 461). Presumably, Hirsch intends the former category to

include Nazi officers as well as political enemy leaders and other members of the Nazi party. Murray (2011) adds to this this categorisation of Nazi officers by arguing that they were often illustrated taking a sadistic delight in torture, sexual perversity and “exposing and degrading bodies” (Murray, 2011, 200). This allowed propagandists and comics publishers to demonise the Nazi enemy, at least in the case of officers and leaders, without overtly focusing on racial or cultural differences as they did with the Japanese (ibid., 204).

However, the average soldier in the *Wehrmacht* was also often characterised as a violent thug or bully, prepared use violence even when it is not required to achieve their intended purpose, a willing myrmidon whose subservience to the enemy leader has facilitated the expression of the soldier’s true nature. This role is reminiscent of many early films in the horror genre and the common Nazi soldier is often characterised in a similar fashion to the stock underling of Gothic villains such as Count Dracula and Doctor Frankenstein, originally called ‘Fritz’ in *Frankenstein* (1931). In comics that possess a more serious tone, such as *Real Heroes* or *The American Air Forces*, they never cease to be the ‘Hun’ (see figure 4.16).⁹⁵ The use of this term in the anti-Germanic context with which it has been associated from prior to the First World War until the present is credited to Rudyard Kipling, though it was used favourably in English before this by Thomas Campbell and Kaiser Wilhelm is recorded to have urged his troops to “fight like Huns” during the Boxer Rebellion (1899 – 1901) in China (Firchow, 1986, 203). The characterisation of the German enemy soldier as the ‘Hun’ is described by Peter Firchow as follows: “It was, in its main outlines and extreme form efficient, disciplined, humourless; cold yet paradoxically sentimental; dull, vulgar and barbaric, yet inordinately proud of its “Kultur”; viscerously cruel on “principle”, unbearably arrogant when victorious, abjectly

⁹⁵ The term deriving from the Asiatic tribe of nomads associated with Attila. For a genealogical history of the Huns and their migrations see Reynolds and Lopez (1946).

cringing in defeat. In short, it was the “hun” (Firchow, 1986, 178). This characterisation of the Germans as the stereotypical ‘Hun’ was carried forward from the First World War through, in part, the popular culture of the Second World War that recounted the prior conflict. The only reference to the German enemy in *The United States Marines #1 – 4* (1943 – 1944), ‘They Did It Before!’, recounts the story of the American Expeditionary Force’s confrontation with the German Army at the Battle of Belleau Wood (1 – 26 June, 1918) near the River Marne in France. In this two page narrative the German enemy are introduced with the term ‘Hun’ and are referred to by this name twice. It is also notable that they are de-individualised in the accompanying illustration in similar fashion to the Japanese with the added dehumanizing factor of being rendered with their eyes hidden beneath the shadow of their helmets in comparison to the surrendering French troops in the subsequent panel (see figure 4.16).

Similar to the characterisation of the Japanese as inhuman monsters with little regard for the sanctity of life or rules of warfare, tales of atrocities by the Nazi ‘Hun’ were also propagated through comics. “Persistent and well authenticated reports indicate that the Nazis slit the throats of paratroopers entangled in trees, beheaded others, and executed some captured jumpers by shooting them pointblank in the face with rifles. These barbarous practices were even visited on the unarmed medical corpsmen who came down with the paratroops” (*The American Air Forces #1*, 1944, 27). Though often incorporated into fantasy narratives, accounts of atrocities published in purportedly factual comics, such as *The American Air Forces*, and their endorsement by state and military institutions lent verisimilitude to these accounts, in turn catalysing hatred of the enemy, facilitating the displacement of aggression and abetting their extermination by members of the American military (Doob, 1950).



Figure 4.16. Panel showing brutality of Nazi soldier. *Real Heroes #7* (Parents' Magazine Press, 1942)

This characterisation of the German enemy soldier as the brutal and cruel 'Hun' also became more commonplace in fantasy comics such as *Uncle Sam Quarterly* as the war progressed. For example: "You should throw it away," laughed the soldier. "In the New Order there'll be no room for such feebleness. [...] You people need Iron, Van Zandt. Iron in the blood! Iron in the soil!" The young soldier shrugged. "But we spend too much time on frailty" (*Uncle Sam # 5*, 1942, 51). In publications such as these, however, the 'Hun' occurred more frequently in written narratives included in the comics rather than as characters within their illustrated narratives.

THEY DID IT BEFORE...!

1—SINCE THE DAYS OF JULIUS CAESAR, the valley of the Marne has been the path by which invaders from the east have taken on their way to Paris. And, early in the dawn of May 27, 1918, the dread Hun moved suddenly to gain this ancient pathway of conquest. . . .



2—A surprise attack carried the Germans across the Aisne and Vesle rivers, and by evening of May 30th, they had the high hills for ten miles along the river Marne's north bank. They had advanced more than thirty miles, taken nearly sixty thousand prisoners, seized vast quantities of armaments and supplies. . . .

Figure 4.16. "They Did It Before...!" *The United States Marines* #2 (Magazine Enterprises, 1944).



Figure 4.17. Panel depicting Nazi officer with scar, monocle and Iron Cross medal. *Real Heroes* #7 (Parents' Magazine Press, 1942).

The characterisation of Nazi military officers was also often as an oafish and easily fooled buffoon, ubiquitously identified as wearing a monocle, frequently bald and portly and often sporting a facial scar and Iron Cross medal. Following on from the analysis of chapter one, as these stereotypes occur in both purportedly factual comics such as *Real Heroes* (Parent's Magazine Press, figure 4.17) and *The American Air Forces* (Magazine Enterprises, figure 4.18) as well as fictional comics like *Devil Dogs Comics* (Street and Smith Publications, figure 4.19), it is feasible that they were, in turn, approved by the OWI, WWB and the U.S. Marine Corps, Navy and Airforce with whom the publishers of these titles cooperated.



Figure 4.18. Panel depicting oafish Nazi officer with shirt open. *The American Air Forces* #1 (Magazine Enterprises, 1944).



Figure 4.19. Panel depicting stereotypical Nazi officer. *Devil Dogs Comics* (Street and Smith Publications, 1942).

These depictions of the Nazi soldier were also saturated with the proposition that, like the Japanese, they were treacherous and prepared to deploy clandestine, immoral tactics in their conflict with Allied forces. For example, figure 4.16 describing the 1918 Spring Offensive (Ludendorff Offensive or *Kaiserschlacht*, March – July 1918), draws attention (accurately) to this advance as a “surprise attack,” contextually evocative of the Japanese ‘surprise attack’ on Pearl Harbor (*The United States Marines* #2, 1944, 34). Similarly, *Devil Dogs Comics* depicts a Nazi General intent upon posing as a friend to a prisoner in protective custody who he later intends to execute (see figure 4.20). As they shared similar physical characteristics with the American heroes in comics⁹⁶, Nazi enemy soldiers were not represented as racially inferior to the extent that occurred in representations of the Japanese. Instead, they were characterised as morally corrupt and culturally inferior, de-individualised and dehumanised by incorporating the same techniques and stereotypes into the narratives in which they were involved.



Figure 4.20. Panel depicting moral corruption of Nazi officer. *Devil Dogs Comics*. (Street and Smith Publications, 1942).

⁹⁶ In the sample analysed in this thesis, exclusively white males.

As well as existing individually within the narratives of Second World War era comics, the two main military enemies of the United States, Germany and Japan, were occasionally depicted acting cooperatively. When this occurs, the alliance between the two enemy nations (or the villainous individuals who represent them) is depicted as uncooperative and deceitful. It is also prone to disagreements and internal conflicts that ultimately result in their downfall. These representations exist in contradistinction to the cooperation exhibited in representations of the political heroes and soldier heroes of the Allied Nations, as discussed in chapter two.

The leading story, 'The Ant Men', in *Uncle Sam Quarterly* #3, written and illustrated by "William Eisner," begins with gothic rhetoric that evokes subterfuge and juxtapositions of magnitude and geographical scale. "Hidden deep in the wind-swept vastness of the Eastern Pacific, nestles a tiny Japanese island... / and [...] like a great vulture, squats a mighty castle" (*Uncle Sam Quarterly* # 3, 1942). The fact that Eisner has here amalgamated tropes of gothic horror and Eastern tropical geography highlights his manipulation of imagery and his expert use of each element of the comics medium to communicate the message of cooperation between the Japanese and Nazi villains representing the enemy nations of the United States (see figure 4.21).



Figure 4.21. Opening sequence from *Uncle Sam Quarterly* #3, using visual elements to signify the cooperation between gothic horror indicative of Europe and tropical geography indicative of the Pacific enemy (Quality Comics, 1942).

These villains are named Professor Sakagima and Von Oberst and are plotting together to create “An army of human ants” so that “America will be smashed to its knees... in one master stroke!!” (ibid.). The plot pivots upon the discovery of a secret formula by a deranged scientist and American fears of invasion by an outside enemy force. As well as this formulaic structure, the names of the villains themselves are highly stereotypical and clearly indicate the nationalities of these characters (Pickering, 2001). Sakagima and Von Oberst are further stereotyped according to their nationalities in that Von Oberst betrays Sakagima where upon one of the Professor’s henchmen attack the German from behind. Before they turn on each other, the relationship between the two villains is shown to be a tentative one of conflicting egos. In this way Eisner has incorporated the message that there is no true and reliable co-operation amongst the villainous members of the Axis comparative to that which exists between the United States and its allies. Von Oberst, as representative of Nazi Germany, believes the Nazis to be the masters of all races and describes their allies, including Sakagima and the Japanese as “puppets” (ibid.).

After the escalation of the conflict in late 1944 and the American government’s request that comics desist in illustrating enemy soldiers as marionettes of corrupt leaders and ideologies (Hirsch, 2014), comics such as *The American Air Forces* altered their output accordingly. They de-emphasized the responsibility of individual enemy leaders and instead increased their focus on the Japanese and Germanic nations as enemies in themselves. In turn, they also included reports of American individuals who killed large numbers of the enemy. These narratives of mass killings are constructed in heroic fashion in which the individual soldier heroes of the United States exhibit bravery, loyalty,

patriotism and violence, often subsequently receiving citations for their actions and annihilation of the enemy.⁹⁷

One such account occurs within *The American Air Forces # 2* (1944) that illustrates the narrative of Major Richard I. Bong, “America’s Ace of Aces”. Bong reportedly shot down twenty-seven Japanese aircraft and who received twenty decorations including “the distinguished service cross, silver star with oak leaf, distinguished flying cross with four oak leaves and the air medal with eleven oak leaves” (*The American Air Forces #2*, 1944). A further example of this narrative of ‘heroic’ mass killing occurs in *The American Air Force #3* (1945) in which Lieutenant Commander Dick Rice “caught about 35 Japs on the docks, killing or injuring all” (*American Air Forces #3*, 1945, 49). Similarly, *The American Air Forces #4* (1945) contains the narrative of fighter pilot Gregory Boyington who “was out to get his 27th Jap when he failed to return” (*The American Air Forces #4*, 1945, 33). After his twenty-sixth kill he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. In each instance these large numbers of enemy kills are equated with heroism under the attributed categories of bravery and violence that lead to acknowledgement of the individual’s achievement by their peers (see figure 4.25).

⁹⁷ For an in-depth discussion of these attributes of the soldier hero see chapter two.



Figure 4.25. "What A Man Boyington! Five In One Day! Whew!!" *The American Air Forces* #4 (Magazine Enterprises, 1945).

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the categories of the leader, the soldier and the symbolic hero that characterise American heroes also apply to the enemies of the United States. Each occurs frequently in the comics analysed in the selected sample. However, the representation of the enemy differs from that of the hero due to each category of enemy possessing differing qualities. As with heroism, enemies have been categorised into the ideological enemies of the United States, enemy soldiers and enemy leaders. As has been demonstrated, these categories are useful in analysing the propaganda function of the enemy in the selected sample of comics. This chapter has also provided evidence to support Hirsch's (2014) argument that there were three distinct stages of enemy characterisation: pre-Pearl Harbor, post-Pearl Harbor, and from late 1944 until the end of the war. This later stage coincided with the escalation of the war effort against enemy civilians (*ibid.*).

Within the category of ideological enemies exists the infiltrator. This characterisation was initially based upon pre-war fears of invasion by an outside and opposing ideological force such as fascism. After Pearl Harbor, this characterisation developed racial connotations directed almost predominantly towards the Japanese and fuelled the hatred and internment of domestic Japanese Americans. Enemy leaders were characterised as either monsters or as buffoons. They were also frequently emasculated, selfish and cowardly, in contradistinction to the attributes of the political hero. Whereas cooperation existed in the narratives of America's political heroes, this was not so with enemy leaders and alliances that did exist were depicted as tentative and prone to collapse. After 1944, the focus shifted away from the category of enemy leaders and onto the nations of Nazi Germany and Japan as a whole in justification of the escalation of the conflict against them.

Enemy soldiers, particularly the Japanese, were characterised as individually weak and physically, morally and culturally inferior to American soldier heroes. This chapter has argued that this was the case for characterisation of the Nazi enemy soldier as well as the Japanese, more widely acknowledged throughout scholarship. Analysis of the almost fetishistic fixation on cultural conventions such as *seppuku*, the de-individualisation that occurred in comics, and the frequent dehumanization of the enemy soldier in terms evocative of vermin indicates that such factors were deliberately incorporated into these artefacts to encourage soldiers to kill the enemy.

Remarkably, the unpublished comics by Moore indicate an affinity between American soldiers and the enemy. These comics present an oppositional position to the categorisation of the brutal enemy who has no regard for life or the rules of warfare. If this is indeed the case, then Moore demonstrates that combatants were not necessarily affected by the messages of hatred towards their opponents despite the best efforts of the propaganda they were subjected to.

Conclusion

This thesis has investigated the significance of the types of heroes and enemies in a specific sample of Second World War era American comics in regard to their function as propaganda. In doing so, it has proven that comics were considered to be a vital wartime asset to the American government and military. It has shown that comics reinforced existing, and constructed new, ideals of heroism and total war values. As well as this, they provided a discursive space in which resistance to dominant ideals could be expressed. During the Second World War, the commercial heroes analysed in this sample embodied the ideology of the American nation during the conflict. The exception to this occurred in comics created by soldiers for their own consumption, analysed in chapters two and three. The heroes in these comics embodied American ideology by focusing on communion with their colleagues and the commodities of home life.

In order to address the research question, a sample of comics was chosen for analysis from the archives of the Library of Congress. The sample was selected based on evidence of a connection between the comics' creators, be that the artist or the publisher, and American governmental institutions such as the OWI, WWB or the US Armed Forces themselves. In this latter instance, the connection was either the purported cooperation of the military in the construction of the comics' content or the creation of comics by members of the armed forces intended for private consumption. Methods of analysis were derived from cultural studies, namely comparative close reading and critical discourse analysis, informed by the semiotics of Barthes, the assumption of the 'implied reader' and by the theory of Stuart Hall concerning the three possible decoding positions of this implied reader.

The introduction argued for comics as texts and as a valuable source for academic study. In doing so, it built upon the work of previous scholars in the field (see, for example,

Silberman, 1986; Wright, 2001; Heer and Worcester, 2009; Murray, 2011; Smith and Duncan, 2012; Chapman et al, 2015a, 2015b). This chapter also presented a review of key texts and theories from the fields of propaganda studies, comics scholarship, humour studies and the literature of heroes and enemies. As the sample exclusively contained American comics that exist within culturally framed mythologies, this chapter also presented a review of significant texts and theories concerning mythology and the American Dream. This section led to a discussion of the theories underpinning mythic criticism as background understanding. The literature review then concluded with an analysis of key writings on stereotyping and role models connected with the characters of heroes and enemies within popular culture and mythology.

Chapter one presented historical evidence indicating the high percentage of American comics' readership immediately before and during the Second World War. It was shown, in relation to pre-war advertising, that comics were considered to be a significant means of communication that could be adapted to a variety of purposes, including the dissemination of ideology and influential messages. Studies into the effectiveness of advertising in comics in the inter-war period demonstrated how loyal customers were to the products they saw advertised by the medium and the high levels of adult consumption of comics during the period in question (*Sales Management*, 1940, 28-30; Gruenberg, 1944, 208). This chapter also established a connection between comics, advertising and propaganda in relation the ideology communicated by all three. It presented the argument that the nature of comics could overcome many of the problems faced by other media associated with propaganda at the time. Of particular importance in this regard was the use of the final panel of a comics' narrative to provide a direct address from the hero (or the advertising company) to the consumer. This tactic was used in pre-war commercial advertising for products such as Rinso.

Under-studied historical sources were then presented concerning the OWI's conscious use of comics as propaganda and their close cooperation with comics' publishers. The cooperation of these publishers formed the justification for a substantial part of the sample of comics analysed in the subsequent chapters. Evidence from government sources highlighted the OWI's awareness of the stereotyped nature of comics' depictions of enemies, their incorporation of comics into their own publications in order to maximize communicative potential, and their indication of the need for direct communication with publishers of comics similar to that of the *Magazine War Guide*. Though the sources analysed in this chapter differ from succeeding chapters in that they were from advertising and governmental sources, the methodology undertaken in their analysis is essentially similar. This chapter was intended to establish a link between the publishers and the offices of the US government, namely the OWI and WWB, by bringing to light their internal communications on the subject of the usefulness of the medium for propaganda purposes. As such, this chapter formed a keystone to the argument that Second World War era comics are total war propaganda, laying the foundation for the argument that analysis of the types of hero and enemies that occur in their narratives are indicative of specific propaganda functions.

Chapter two categorized the hero figures in the selected sample according to the attributes of their characterisation. The three groupings identified were the political hero, the symbolic hero and the soldier hero. Each categorisation possessed attributes that overlapped, namely bravery, loyalty and patriotism. Some characteristics, such as the acquisition of language and horsemanship were present in texts dealing with political heroes only. Recklessness was shown to be an additional attribute in the depiction of foreign political heroes by Parents' Magazine Press. Uniquely, only the soldier hero possesses the quality of spectacular violence directed towards the enemy.

The spectacular violence in commercial comics intended for consumption by the military indicates that this attribute was considered by the US military to be an essential role during total war. This was arguably due to the heroes of these comics providing violent models for their readers to emulate. These publications also focus satirically upon cultural differences, predominantly those of the Japanese, and fetishize the moment of the death of the enemy, especially when caused by fire or the act of seppuku. Unlike comics illustrated by soldiers and those titles consumed by soldiers, commercial comics intended for home front consumption actively dehumanised and ridiculed the enemy, construing them in demonic terms in accordance with the propaganda of defence and the mythological narrative of good versus evil that was used to frame American involvement in the war.

Consideration of unpublished comics created by members of the armed forces has shown the important discursive space that the creation of comics provided for serving soldiers and highlighted the ideological differences between the content of comics produced by soldiers and those produced for them. Analysis of amateur, soldier-illustrated comics in the unpublished materials collected as part of the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress revealed that the medium was used as a personal discourse allowing soldiers to express resistance to the dominant propaganda narrative and the undemocratic hierarchy of military institutions. These comics were also used as a mechanism for coping with their reality and provided a means of addressing emotions such as grief and anxiety.

Chapter three argued that the categories that characterise American Second World War heroes also apply to the enemies of the United States. Representation of the enemy differed slightly from that of the hero due to each category possessing differing qualities. As such, the types of enemy were described as the enemy leader, enemy soldier and the ideological enemy. This chapter provided evidence to support Hirsch's (2014) argument

that there were three distinct stages of enemy characterisation: pre-1942, 1942-1944, and post 1944 until the end of the war. This later stage coincided with the escalation of the war effort against enemy civilians (Hirsch, 2014). Within the category of ideological enemies exists the infiltrator. This category is akin to that identified by Chalmers (2011) that applied to the Jew in Nazi propaganda. This characterisation in American propaganda comics was initially based upon pre-war fears of invasion by an outside and opposing ideological force such as fascism. After Pearl Harbor, this characterisation developed racial connotations directed almost predominantly towards the Japanese. However, chapter also demonstrated that comics produced by soldiers, at least in the sample available in the Library of Congress archives, do not dehumanize, ridicule, de-individualise or vilify the enemy. In one instance the comics analysed reveal an empathy towards the enemy that directly contradicts the spectacular violence advocated by commercial propaganda comics.

Enemy leaders in this sample were shown to be characterised either as monsters or as buffoons and, occasionally, as both. Enemy leaders were frequently emasculated, selfish and cowardly. Whereas cooperation existed in the narratives of America's political heroes, this was not so with enemy leaders. Any alliances that did exist were depicted as tentative and prone to collapse. After 1944, the focus shifted away from the category of enemy leaders and onto the nations of Nazi Germany and Japan as a whole. This supports Hirsch's argument that this was intended to justify the escalation of the conflict against them (ibid.). Enemy soldiers were characterised as physically, morally and culturally inferior to American soldier heroes. This is particularly the case with the Japanese enemy soldier. However, this chapter argued that the Nazi enemy soldier was also characterised in this way. Also, analysis of the fixation on cultural conventions such as *seppuku*, the de-individualisation that occurred in comics and the dehumanization of

the enemy soldier indicated that such factors may have been deliberately incorporated into these artefacts to encourage the extermination of the enemy.

This thesis set out to address the significance of a selected sample of Second World War era American comics in connection with total war propaganda and their representations of heroes and enemies. To do so it initially demonstrated that cartoons and comic strips gain a significant amount of attention from the newspaper and magazine reading public. In addition to the heroic ideals identified in the literature review, these comics show that Parents' Magazine Press regarded leadership, language acquisition, sporting prowess, horsemanship, foresight and the ability to overcome adversity as elements of heroism and attributes of heroic leadership. Further, their comics addressed anxiety on the home front by reassuring the American nation about the competence of their leaders and their ability to overcome the challenge presented by total war in accordance with Goebbels' principles (Doob, 1950). The spectacular violence inherent in publications intended for troop consumption indicate that the heroic role models for service personnel were deliberately viewed by the US government and military establishments as useful assets in wartime. Heroic narratives in comics frequently personified aspects of American ideology and mythology such as in the popular character of Uncle Sam. Curiously, despite their narratives playing upon American fears of both physical and ideological invasion, their conclusions redress this anxiety, replacing it with assertions about the strength and cooperation of America's leader heroes, soldier heroes and symbolic heroes. They also clearly promote the validity of the American cause construed in defensive terms (Morelli, 2014).

As has been demonstrated, comics engaged with the wartime requirements of the American nation to identify and characterize its enemies. They also identified these enemies as targets for national hatred and violent extermination. They did so by clearly identifying and demonizing the enemy and constructing the conflict in terms of self-

preservation and the messianic quest of good against the forces of evil. In contrast to OWI's conclusion that there was a lack of realistic violence in comics, the graphic realism of spectacularly violent images was, in fact, shown to be dependent upon the intended consumer demographic of particular publications. The evidence presented counters the OWI's conclusion that comics misrepresented realistic violence. Though there are instances of violence within comics designed for home front and civilian consumption, these lack the brutality and realism of the images created for soldiers. These latter comics even contain rare depictions of American casualties. As with the notion of the hero as role model identified in the literature review, these spectacularly violent and realistic images arguably also provided role models to be emulated in the killing of the enemy by military readers (Klapp, 2014, xxiii; Hatfield et al, 2013, xiv). They were clearly, on some level, identified as being of value to the nation during this period of total war due to the fact that publishers such as Magazine Enterprises and Street and Smith Publications gained the cooperation and endorsement of the US Armed Forces in their production.

The comics illustrated by American soldiers during the Second World War and collected as part of the Veterans History Project of the Library of Congress, reveal the significance of comics for those involved in service. The fact that servicemen chose the comics form to express their experiences and, in one instance, to record their daily involvement in the conflict, shows the importance of the medium as a subject for further academic analysis and is important evidence that comics provided a discourse through which soldiers could express their reaction to the war and resist the loss of identity engendered by the military (Du Pont, 2015, 111-112; Holman and Kelly, 2001, 262). These unpublished comics present unique evidence that soldiers used humour as a coping mechanism to deal with the dangers and absurdities of their situation. In line with Hünig's theory, humour was used to bolster the social cohesion of soldiers, particularly during training (Hünig, 2005). In addition, they also used the medium to exhibit grief and anxiety

at loss and the dangers faced by their colleagues. The comics analysed in this study provide rare insight into the emotional reaction of a soldier at the loss of a colleague and to the mortal realities of active service.

The affinity with other soldiers exhibited in these comics has shown that participation in the military incorporates a sense of imagined community (Anderson, 1991) and that this reflects and encourages the heroic ideals of loyalty (Moss, 2011, 9) and the willingness to risk one's life for ones colleagues that is essential during war time (Synnott, 2009, 22). However, this study has also revealed a trend towards the lack of vilification of the enemy in soldier illustrated narratives. These comics indicate that soldiers respected the enemy as being in a similar situation to themselves, even to the levels of empathy shown in the comics illustrations of Moore. Similarly, they did not display jingoistic patriotism but, instead, exhibit a grassroots patriotism focused on the comforts and commodities of American life that reified their connection with home. The unique contribution of these artefacts indicates the importance of unpublished, amateur comics as an avenue for further study. Similarly, further research into the connection between the OWI and comics publishers will add to the history of both the comics industry and the Second World War. For example, whether the OWI identified the need for a comics-specific *Magazine War Guide* due to abundance of comics publishers or their belligerence in following the recommendations of the existing guide is still unclear. Indeed, the connection between comics and war throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is still an under-explored avenue of inquiry.

In conclusion, this thesis has presented evidence that the heroes and enemies identified in the sample each had a specific and significant propaganda function by communicating heroic and enemy types to both the civilian and military populations, adding to the dominant propaganda narrative of the nation. This analysis has also demonstrated the importance of unpublished, amateur comics to certain members of the

American armed forces as a creative, discursive space in which alternative voices could express resistance to the dominance of military life and the propaganda of total war.

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